

Calvinism,
Hyper-Calvinism
&
Arminianism

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Hyper-Calvinism
&

Arminianism

A THEOLOGICAL PRIMER
Third Edition

KENNETH G. TALBOT
&
W. GARY CRAMPTON

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by

Kenneth G Talbot, Ph.D., Th.D.
W. Gary Crampton, Ph.D., Th.D.

The authors have used many sources in writing this book,
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Cover designed by Ryan Holmberg
at www.ironlungsstudios.com

Printed and Bound in the United States

by

Christian Resorces Inc.
1505 NW 4th Ave.
Battle Ground, WA 98604
360-687-7311
William Webster, Director

Dedicated to

Phyllis Talbot

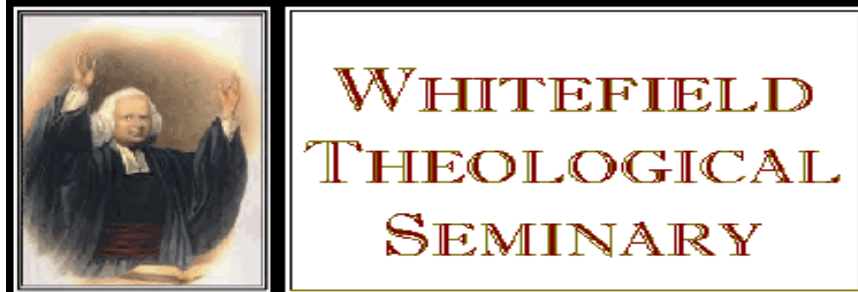
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Her husband also, and he praises her”**

Proverbs 31:28



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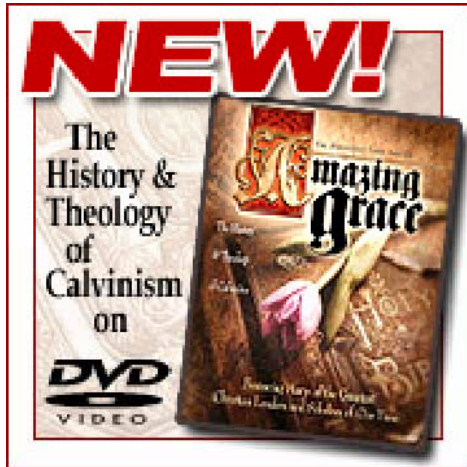
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Just what is “Calvinism?” Does this teaching make man a deterministic robot and God the author of sin? What about free will? If the church accepts Calvinism, won’t evangelism be stifled, perhaps even extinguished? How can we balance God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility? What are the differences between historic Calvinism and hyper-Calvinism? Why did men like Augustine,

Luther, Calvin, Spurgeon, Whitefield, Edwards and a host of renowned Protestant evangelists deny the Arminian definition of free will and label it heresy? Why did the Roman Catholic Church condemn the Reformed teaching of predestination and election and embrace free will theology? And why do so many Protestants, perhaps unwittingly, agree with Rome on this issue?

Amazing Grace — The History and Theology of Calvinism is the first video documentary that answers these and other related questions. Hosted by Eric Holmberg (*Hell’s Bells 1 & 2; The Massacre of Innocence*) this fascinating three-part, four-hour presentation is detailed enough so as to not gloss over the controversy. At the same time, it is broken up into ten “Sunday-school-sized” sections to make the rich content manageable and accessible for the average viewer.

Rich in graphics, dramatic vignettes, and biblical analogies, *Amazing Grace: The History and Theology of Calvinism* also features many of the finest reformed thinkers and pastors of our time: Dr. R.C. Sproul, Dr. D. James Kennedy, Dr. George Grant, Dr. Stephen Mansfield, Dr. Thomas Ascol, Dr. Thomas Nettles, Dr. Roger Schultz, Pastor Walt Chantry, Dr. Joe Morecraft, Dr. Ken Talbot, Pastor Walter Bowie and Dr. R.C. Sproul, Jr..

Contents

About the Authors	10
Authors' Preface	11
Reviews	13
Foreword by <i>Dr. D. James Kennedy</i>	15
1. When Two Creeds Meet	17
2. The Sovereignty of God	25
3. Man and the Plight of Sin	37
4. Divine Election or Human Decision?	47
5. The Atonement of Christ	57
6. Calling Men to Christ	71
7. Perseverance or Once Saved Always Saved?	83
8. Divine Providence or Christian Humanism?	95
9. Is God the Author of Sin?	103
10. Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism	111
Appendix A: <i>A Display of Arminianism</i>	119
Appendix B: <i>Calvinism in America</i>	127
Appendix C: <i>Justification by Faith Alone</i>	145
End Notes	155

About the Authors

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Authors' Preface

This book has been written to clarify, in layman's terms, the major differences between the basic theological systems found within the Christian church today: Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism, and Arminianism. Historically, the church has been predominantly Calvinistic (see chapter ten). It is the theological system supported in this book, and the only one which can be shown to be faithful to the teaching of Scripture. In the words of B. B. Warfield: "Calvinism is...Theism come to its rights....Religion at the height of its conception.... Evangelicalism in its purest and most stable expression."*

Calvinism asserts the absolute sovereignty of God over each and every aspect of life while at the same time it maintains, with Scripture, that man is a responsible being. No place is this more clearly seen than in the salvation of lost souls. God is the efficient first cause of salvation; it is solely His work. Yet man is responsible to persevere in the faith.

Hyper-Calvinism, as the name implies, is a perversion of Calvinism. It so stresses the sovereignty of God in election that man's responsibility is practically eliminated. The need for evangelism is altogether obviated and it distorts the proper understanding of the doctrines.

Arminianism, as a system of dogma, is the majority report within Christendom today. Yet, it is a serious deviation from the biblical teaching on salvation. Arminian theology accentuates

*Calvin and Augustine, p. 476

the ability of fallen man to respond to the gospel to the virtual exclusion of God's sovereign, predestinating grace. Man becomes the author, or first cause, of his own salvation. This is not biblical Christianity.

It is the authors' desire that the reader will study *Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism, and Arminianism* with Bible in hand to see if the things taught herein are true (see Acts 17:11). If the teachings of this book are not in accord with Scripture, then they should be cast aside. But if this book indeed teaches biblical truth, then this truth must be adhered to.

The authors recommend that *Appendix A* be read with Chapter One, *Appendix B* be read with Chapter Ten, and *Appendix C* be read with Chapter Five.

Reviews

“Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism is a clear expression of the Reformed faith in non-technical language. Drs. Talbot and Crampton have given the church a book which will establish the thinking of new students in Reformed theology and challenge the Arminian in a biblical manner. I recommend this book to pastors, students and laymen who hold to the doctrines of grace, and to those who are seeking for the truth.”

Dr. Loraine Boettner (Deceased)

Writer and Theologian

“This book is without a doubt the most important book you will ever read as an introduction to the doctrinal issues dealing with Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism. Drs. Talbot and Crampton have given to the church a clear and concise teaching on the biblical understanding of salvation. This book is perfect for classroom or personal study. I highly recommend this book to pastors, students, and laymen.”

Jerry Johnson, M.Phil.

Executive Director, *The Apologetics Group*

“The resurgence of historical, evangelical Calvinism in our day has unfortunately yet inevitably resulted in a great deal of misinformation about the biblical teachings that are associated with that nickname. One of the best ways to clear away the confusion and come to an accurate understanding of Calvinism is to study it in contrast to views that may appear to be similar to it but which in reality are very different from it. Such discriminating teaching sets the truth in proper contrast to the “almost-truth.” Kenneth Talbot’s and Gary Crampton’s book, Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism does exactly that. It is an excellent tool for anyone who wants to understand what the Bible actually teaches about the salvation that we have in Jesus Christ. I highly recommend it.”

Dr. Thomas Ascol

Pastor, *Grace Baptist Church* and Editor of the *Founders Journal*

“This book provides a provocative exposition of the Reformed faith and is written in a manner conducive to understanding. Its biblical style is foundational to the reformed tradition. I commend Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism, and Arminianism to the church, and especially to the serious student of the Bible.”

Tom Patterson

Editor, *The HIGHROADS, ARPC*

Foreword

I am a Presbyterian and a Calvinist. That comes as a surprise to many even though I have worked in the Presbyterian Church for many years and served it in many capacities.

People ask, “How can you be a Calvinist? You preach the Bible and don’t Calvinists believe in...?”

The term *Calvinist* has been so abused for so very long that people have many misconceptions about it.

I am a Calvinist *precisely because* I love the Bible and the God of the Bible. The doctrines of the Calvinist theological system are the doctrines of the Bible. When you get to know what we actually believe you may find you too are a Calvinist, *especially* if you love the Lord Jesus Christ and desire with all your heart to serve Him.

Calvinism represents the central message of Scripture and our doctrines are held to some degree by most evangelical Christians. One group will add a few doctrines and another will subtract a few, but most biblical Christians will find when they learn what we actually believe, that we have much in common.

Calvinists refuse to accept easy solutions to the great mysteries of God which appear in the Scriptures. Perhaps the greatest tension in the Christian faith is between the authority of God and the responsibility of man. People tend to emphasize one or the other. Calvinism maintains both. Those who eliminate the responsibility of man are *hyper-Calvinists*. Those who eliminate the authority of God are *Arminians*. Neither of these positions accurately deals with the full message of the Bible. *God’s grace is simply bigger than either exaggeration.*

Drs. Kenneth G. Talbot and W. Gary Crampton have provided in their book, *Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism, and Arminianism*, a new and fresh examination of the biblical doctrines of sovereign grace. Their views are set forth logically, biblically and convincingly. It is a book which should be read by anyone seeking to understand the biblical doctrine of salvation.

As one who loves the doctrines of grace, I invite you to read on and find out what Calvinists really believe. You may well be surprised and you will probably begin asking questions which will take the rest of your life to answer.

D. James Kennedy, Ph.D.
Pastor, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

Chapter One

When Two Creeds Meet

The history of the Christian Church is filled with theological confrontations. Yet we must remember that theological confrontation is not always bad for the church. In 1 Corinthians 11:18b-19, the Apostle Paul spoke to this very fact: *“I hear that... there are divisions among you...for there must be factions among you in order to show which of you have God’s approval.”* If the church fathers had not examined each and every doctrine introduced in the church, the church would have been riddled with heretical dogma.

When two creeds meet in the Church of Jesus Christ, it is important that we consider both theological positions honestly and carefully in light of Holy Scripture. If we fail to present truthfully either side of the issue, we ourselves are violators of the law of God and worthy of His judgment. We must always be forthright and honest with the Word of God and the teachings of men.

Historically, neo-fundamentalist ministers have not been straightforward in their dealings with the issue of God’s sovereignty. This should make anyone who professes faith in Christ question the intention and honesty of such men in their roles of leadership.

The standard of any theological issue is *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone). It is the Bible which must be the final judge in all matters of faith, life, and practice. Unless this standard is maintained, the church will be led astray by every wind of

doctrine. The fundamental principle of interpretation is that Scripture interprets Scripture (Luther's "analogy of faith"); that is, Scripture is its own best interpreter. Hence, only those theological teachings which can withstand the scrutiny of Holy Writ are to be maintained.

It is our intention to show that the historical faith of the Christian Church is that system of theology which is commonly known as Calvinism. And that it is the only system which is consistent with the Word of God. Charles Spurgeon writes:

I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what is nowadays called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel...unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace...unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called.¹

We confess with this great Baptist theologian, that there can be no true presentation of the gospel if it is not set forth in the purity of the Word of God.

It is our contention that any compromise of Calvinism is a step towards humanism. It is highly probable that the impoverishing of the twentieth and twenty-first century church, and society in turn, is due to the fact that the doctrines of sound, biblical Calvinism have not been preached. Arminianism, as a creedal system, stands as the *avant-garde* of the present day church;

it is a serious deviation from biblical Christianity. The results of its proclamations are noticeable. Loraine Boettner observes:

We are living in a day in which practically all of the historic churches are being attacked from within by unbelief. Many of them have already succumbed. And most invariably the line of descent has been from Calvinism to Arminianism, from Arminianism to Liberalism, and then to Unitarianism. And the history of Liberalism and Unitarianism shows that they deteriorate into a social gospel that is too weak to sustain itself. We are convinced that the future of Christianity is bound up with that system of theology historically called 'Calvinism.' Where the God-centered principles of Calvinism have been abandoned, there has been a strong tendency downward into the depths of man-centered naturalism or secularism. Some have declared — rightly, we believe — that there is no consistent stopping place between Calvinism and atheism.²

The two creeds which are at issue here are Calvinism and Arminianism. The matter may be presented in this simple thesis: either God is the first cause of salvation by His sovereign will, or man is the first cause in salvation by his sovereign will. Either regeneration precedes faith or faith precedes regeneration. Both systems cannot be correct. They are diametrically opposed to each other. The first position is God-centered in salvation, the latter is man centered; the first position is Calvinism, the latter is Arminianism. To whom do you owe your salvation—God or man? The Bible claims “*Salvation is of Jehovah.*” In Jonah 2:9 we read: “*But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.*” Further, we read in

Psalm 3:8: *“Salvation belongs to the LORD. Your blessing is upon Your people. Selah.”*

Various books have been written about Calvinism which are little more than caricatures of the creedal system. “Hyper-Calvinism” is the result. This false system opts for a stoic, fatalistic God who acts capriciously in the process of salvation. It likewise relegates mankind to the level of a robot, without any responsibility before his Creator (as in Islam). Nothing could be further from true Calvinism. David Engelsma observes:

In most cases the charge ‘Hyper-Calvinist’ is nothing but a deceptive attack upon Calvinism itself. Someone hates Calvinism, or the uncompromising, consistent defense of Calvinism; yet he hesitates to attack Calvinism openly and forthrightly, and therefore he disguises his attack on “Hyper-Calvinism” and “Hyper-Calvinists.”³

The purpose of this book is not to attack men personally. Rather, it is to protect the church from the heretical doctrines of anti-Calvinistic teachings, and to aid in her return to the true claims of the Word of God. The historical faith of Christianity is Calvinistic. It is our opinion that if the church does not return to her Reformational shorings, she will reap the whirlwind of a truncated gospel and man-centered faith.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

The Scriptures are written for our knowledge of the Truth.

Proverbs 22:19-22: *So that your trust may be in the LORD; I have instructed you today, even you. Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge, that I may make you know the*

certainty of the words of truth, that you may answer words of truth to those who send to you?

Matthew 4:4: *But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"*

John 17:17: *Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.*

2 Timothy 3:15: *And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

2 Peter 1:19: *And so we have the prophetic word more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.*

The Scriptures are inspired and profitable for doctrine.

Luke 16:29-31: *Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' "And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' "But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"*

Ephesians 2:20: *Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.*

2 Timothy 3:16: *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

1 Timothy 4:16: *Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue*

in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

2 Peter 1:21: *For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

The Scriptures are the final authority on all matters of life, faith and practice.

Romans 15:4: *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

1 John 1:34: *That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.*

QUESTIONS:

1. How important is it for the church to contend over doctrinal issues?

2. Why should Christians always be honest in their examination and presentation of doctrine from different points of view?

3. What is the standard for determining which doctrine is biblical and which is not?

4. What do you think Dr. Loraine Boettner means when he states that there is not a consistent stopping point between Calvinism and Atheism?

Chapter Two

The Sovereignty Of God

The major tenet of Reformed or Calvinistic theology is that of the sovereignty of God. What is meant by this phraseology? Simply stated, when we speak of the sovereignty of God, we mean that God is God in all of His Holy attributes, His works of creation, providence, and salvation. God is the first cause of all that exists, and nothing exists which is not foreordained by Him. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Presbyterian) states:

*God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.*⁴

The *London Confession of Faith* (Baptist) states the same principle in this manner:

*God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass.*⁵

If anything were to exist independently of God, it would, of necessity, be coequal with God. But the Bible declares: “to whom

then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him?” (Isaiah 40:18).

God is God in that He is independent and self-existent. He depends upon nothing outside of Himself: *“For just as the Father has life in Himself, so also He gave to the Son to have life in Himself”* (John 5:26).

The independence of God also extends to the will of God: *“And all of the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, what hast Thou done?”* (Daniel 4:35).

God’s independence is also seen in His power: *“Our God is in the heavens; He does whatsoever He pleases”* (Psalm 115:3). The counsel of God is independent: *“The counsel of the Lord stands firm forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation”* (Psalm 33:11).

Since God thinks and acts independently, all of His actions are according to His knowledge. God knows all things inherently. He never gains knowledge. All things which have come into existence have done so in accordance with His sovereign plan.

Since God created all things, He first had to know all things before they came into existence. All things which exist, physical and spiritual, proceed from the mind of the all knowing God. Scripture states that the Triune Deity of the Bible has declared *“the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure”* (Isaiah 46:10).

Along this same line, the apostle Paul writes, *“Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways”* (Romans 11:33). Everything exists to fulfill the purpose of God. *“For in Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.*

All things have been created through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16).

Since God's purpose is all inclusive, it extends to the salvation of mankind. Paul states: "*We have also obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory*" (Ephesians 1:11,12). It is upon the basis of God's absolute sovereignty that Scripture assures us that He works all things after the counsel of His will.

Notice is made of the way Scripture speaks of the all inclusive nature of God's will being the final or ultimate cause of all that comes to pass:

- 1) Of creation and preservation: *Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed and were created.* (Revelation 4:11)
- 2) Of government: *The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes*
.
(Proverbs 21:1)
- 3) Of the sufferings of Christ: *This man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put him to death.*
(Acts 2:23)
- 4) Of election and reprobation: *For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it does not depend upon the man who wills, or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.* (Romans 9:15-16)

- 5) Of regeneration: *In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the Word of Truth, so that we might be as it were the first fruits among His creatures.* (James 1:18)
- 6) Of sanctification: *For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.* (Philippians 2:13)
- 7) Of the suffering of believers: *For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.* (1 Peter 3:17)
- 8) Of man's life and destiny: *Instead you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that.* (James 4:15)
- 9) Of the most minute details in life: *Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father?* (Matthew 10:29)
- 10) Of the destiny of nations: *He changes times and seasons, He sets up kings [i.e., nations] and deposes them.* (Daniel 2:21) *Surely the nations are as a drop in the bucket [to God], they are to be regarded as dust on the scales.* (Isaiah 40:15)
- 11) The secret and revealed will of God: *The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may obey all the words of this law.* (Deuteronomy 29:29)

Some have asserted that the doctrine of God's sovereignty, as expressed in the Reformed (Calvinistic) faith, is harsh and stoic. But this is not the case. The God of the Bible always acts in accordance with His attributes, which are perfect in every respect. In other words, God only does that which is perfect. It is impossible for Him to do otherwise. However, what is perfect in the eyes of God often meets with disapproval by man. This is one of the many problems found in Arminian thinking.

One of the attributes of God is holiness. The biblical words used of God, in the original languages of the Old and New Testaments, for "*holiness*," refer, not only to His purity, but also to His being "*set apart*." He is distinct from all of His creation. This is what makes God holy, and holiness an important attribute.

We also must remember that God always acts according to His attributes. God can never deny Himself as we are told in 2 Timothy 2:13: "*If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*" He is motivated by holiness in everything He does. Hence, every activity of God in His creation, is the epitome of perfection: "*And the four living creatures, each of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to cry Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was, and is, and who is to come... Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created*" (Revelation 4:8,11).

The doctrine of the immutability of God goes hand in hand with His sovereignty. God is unchangeable. The eternal purposes of the Triune Deity, expressed in His decrees, cannot ever be altered (Isaiah 14:27; 46:9-10; Job 42:2). If God could change His mind or plans, He would not be infinitely wise in His works of creation and providence.

How could an all wise God change His mind and devise a more perfect plan? How could a sovereign Deity, who has

foreordained all things from all eternity, have His decrees changed by the wiles of man, who is a creature of God and is dependent upon Him for his own existence? God's sovereign decrees are:

- 1) Founded upon divine wisdom: *Also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His own will.*
(Ephesians 1:11)
- 2) Eternal, before the foundation of the world: *The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation.* (Psalm 33:11)
- 3) Efficacious, they always come to pass: *Many are the plans of a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord, it is that which will stand.* (Proverbs 19:21)
- 4) Unchangeable, they always remain the same: *But He is unique and who can oppose Him? He does whatsoever He pleases.* (Job 23:13)
- 5) Unconditional, nothing can occur outside of the will of God: *This man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put him to death.* (Acts 2:23)
Nothing or no one can alter His plans: *"I know that Thou canst do all things, nothing can thwart Thy plan"*
(Job 42:2).
- 6) All inclusive:
 - a) The good actions of men: *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God*

prepared beforehand, in order that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

- b) The wicked actions of men: *The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of destruction.* (Proverbs 16:4)
- c) Seemingly contingent events: *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.* (Proverbs 16:33)
- d) The means as well as the end in salvation (and all things): *But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren, beloved by the Lord, because He has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.* (2 Thessalonians 2:13)
- e) The duration of man's life: *Since his days are determined, the number of his months is with Thee, and the limits Thou hast set so that he cannot pass.* (Job 14:5)
- f) The place of man's habitation: *And He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitations.* (Acts 17:26)

God decrees all things that will ever come to pass for His own sovereign good purposes and glory (Ephesians 1:11). But He likewise does so in order that men will learn to fear Him. *"I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take away from it. For God has so worked that men should fear Him"* (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

The sovereignty of God is foundational to Christianity. It is

a basic principle of Calvinism. If this tenet is removed by the false doctrines of any other creedal system, then the whole of biblical Christianity will fall with it. If we do not have a sovereign God, then our faith is worthless. Boettner observes:

God created this world in which we find ourselves, He owns it, and He is running it according to His own sovereign good pleasure. God has lost none of His power, and it is highly dishonoring to Him to suppose that He is struggling with the human race, doing the best He can to persuade men to do right, but unable to accomplish His eternal unchangeable, holy, wise, and sovereign purpose.⁶

We will see, in the remainder of this book, that salvation is all of God, from beginning to end. It is a salvation that is grounded in the sovereign, eternal electing purpose of the great triune God of Scripture. The whole process of salvation flows from God's electing love and predestination, but it moves to its goal, which is the glory of God, through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, as the elected saints persevere to the end and are glorified.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

God is sovereign in all things, including salvation.

1 Chronicles 29:10-12: *Therefore David blessed the LORD before all the assembly; and David said: "Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all."*

Job 42:12: *Then Job answered the LORD and said: "I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You."*

Psalm 115:3: *But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.*

Isaiah 14:24-27: *The LORD of hosts has sworn, saying, "Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, and as I have purposed, so it shall stand: That I will break the Assyrian in My land, and on My mountains tread him underfoot. Then his yoke shall be removed from them, and his burden removed from their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed against the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?"*

Isaiah 46:9-11: *Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,' Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.*

Isaiah 55:11: *So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

Jeremiah 32:17: *Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.*

Daniel 4:34-36: *And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: for*

His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"

Matthew 19:26: *But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*

QUESTIONS:

1. What is meant by the phrase 'the sovereignty of God?'

2. Is God dependent upon man for anything? Explain.

3. What is meant by the 'holiness' of God?

4. What is meant by the phrase 'God is the first cause of all things?'

5. What are the eleven (11) areas listed in this chapter declaring God's sovereignty over all of His creation?

6. Why is it important for us to understand that God is immutable?

7. What are the six principles of God's sovereign decrees discussed in this chapter and why are they important?

8. Of all the doctrines taught in Calvinistic theology, which is most basic?

Chapter Three

Man And The Plight Of Sin

One of the major differences in the theologies of Calvinism and Arminianism is that of the effects of sin on the human race. Both systems agree that the fall of man took place in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), and both basically maintain that the whole human race has been greatly affected by the fall. The question is, *“how great is the effect?”*

The Bible claims that Adam, as the first man, was the covenant head or federal representative of all humanity. Therefore, when he (as covenant head) fell, his sin was imputed to every man, woman, and child. Paul writes: *“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned”* (Romans 5:12). The apostle says that every human being is conceived dead in sin, because of Adam’s transgression in the Garden. We are all guilty. David confirms this: *“I have been a sinner from birth, in sin my mother conceived me”* (Psalm 51:5).

Christian theology refers to this as the doctrine of Original Sin. This doctrine teaches that all persons are judicially guilty, due to Adam’s sin. It is a legal transaction, just as Christians are legally

justified due to the imputation of Christ's righteousness to them (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:18,19; see chapter five).

Arminian theology holds that the human race was seriously affected by the fall, but that man was not left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. Every sinner still has the ability to repent and believe in the gospel. The eternal destiny of each person depends on how he uses this ability. One may either cooperate with God, or choose to reject God. But the choice is up to the individual.

Calvinism vehemently disagrees with Arminianism at this point. The Reformed Christian avers that the fall of man has left all persons in a state of total depravity or inability. Man is incapable of doing anything that pleases God. He is dead in sin: spiritually blind and deaf to the things of God. Apart from the regenerative work of God in man's life, in which he does not participate one iota, no one can ever repent and believe the gospel. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* states this well when it says:

*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.*⁷ (Also see: London (Baptist) Confession of Faith 1689, Chapter 9, Section 3).

It is important to note that the Calvinist does not say that man is absolutely depraved; that is, that every man is as wicked as he can possibly be. This hyper-Calvinistic false teaching is sometimes wrongly attributed to Reformed theology.

As stated above, what the Calvinist does say is that sin has affected every part of man's being (all of his faculties, e.g., the mind, the will), to the point where he is unable to do anything pleasing to God. Man is capable of doing many "seemingly" good

works. He can give to charities, he can help others in need, etc. But he does not ever seek to do anything to the glory of his Creator. Thus, all that he does is sinful. To quote another of the historical creeds of the church, The *Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England* states that all works done by unregenerate men are:

*not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ; neither do they make men meet to receive grace...yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.*⁸

Neither does Calvinism teach that fallen man has lost his freedom of the will, in the sense of free moral agency. The Reformed Christian holds that all men are free in this regard; they always do that which they choose to do (in actuality, they cannot do otherwise). To maintain that man does not have free moral agency would be to allege that he could never make a choice about anything at all. That would be absurd!

The problem is that fallen man does not have a neutral will. He is conceived dead in sin. That is, even though man is born with the freedom to choose what he so desires, he no longer has the ability to choose good (righteousness). His every desire is to do evil in the sight of God.

Man's will is, therefore, not autonomous and undetermined. It is always determined by its desires, its inward dispositions. The desire of Christian man, with his regenerate heart, is to do the will of his Father. The desire of non-Christian man is to serve self. In short, the will of unregenerate man is enslaved to sin. This is what the Bible teaches.

The prophet Jeremiah contends that man is unable to transform his sinful character: "*Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed*

to do evil?” (Jeremiah 13:23). Jesus Christ teaches this in Matthew 12:35, where He says: “*The good man out of his good treasures sends forth good things, and the evil man out of his evil treasures sends forth evil things.*”

Paul writes that nonbelievers are “*darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God; it is because of the ignorance which is in them, due to the hardening of their hearts. They have lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a greediness for more*” (Ephesians 4:18-19). These people, claims the apostle, are “*dead in [their] transgressions and sins*” (Ephesians 2:1). “*There is no one who is righteous, no not one; there is none who understands, no one seeks God. All have turned away...there is no one who does good, not even one*” (Romans 3:10-12).

In Romans 8:7, Paul further states that “*the sinful mind is at enmity with God; it does not submit to the law of God, nor can it do so.*” In 1 Corinthians 2:14, the apostle writes: “*the natural man does not accept the things of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*” Notice in these last two verses that the Bible stresses the total inability of fallen man to respond positively to the law of God. This is what the Calvinist refers to as “*total depravity.*”

If fallen man is going to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, it must be solely by the grace of God. Ephesians 2:8 & 9 reads: “*it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith, and this not of yourselves, it is the free gift of God, not of works, so that no one may boast.*” If Arminianism were true, then salvation would not be by grace; it would be merited by the free choice of fallen man. This is not what the Bible teaches. Jesus Himself taught that “*no man can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him*” (John 6:44).

One final thing needs to be studied regarding man’s “*free will.*” In Arminian theology, for man to be free, nothing may

determine his choices; they must be completely spontaneous. But this is impossible! There is no such thing as an uncaused action. Every choice man makes is caused by something (i.e., some inner disposition), otherwise, he couldn't choose. The concept of an uncaused choice is self-contradictory. No choice can be completely spontaneous.

Moreover, if this Arminian concept of free will is taken to its logical conclusion, then it would be sinful to preach the gospel to fallen man. Why? Because it would be an attempt to *cause* him to turn to Christ, which would be a violation of his free will. The Calvinist definition of free will, as discussed above, is the only position which is consistent with the teaching of the Bible.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

Men are born in sin.

John 3:57: 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.'"

Men are spiritually dead in sin.

Genesis 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.

Genesis 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."

Ecclesiastes 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.*

Jeremiah 17:9: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?*

Mark 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.*

John 3:19: *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.*

Romans 8:7: *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.*

1 Corinthians 2:14: *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

Titus 1:15: *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.*

Men are slaves to sin.

John 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.

Ephesians 2:12: 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.

2 Timothy 2:25-26: In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

1 John 5:19: We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

John 8:34: Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin."

Romans 6:20: For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

All men are under the reign of sin.

Job 15:14-16: What is man, that he could be pure? And he who is born of a woman, that he could be righteous? If God puts no trust in His saints, and the heavens are not pure in His sight, How much less man, who is abominable and filthy, who drinks iniquity like water!

Psalms 130:3: If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

Proverbs 20:9 ; Who can say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin"?

Ecclesiastes 7:20: *For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin.*

Isaiah 53:6: *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

Isaiah 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.*

Romans 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."*

1 John 1:8: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

1 John 1:10: *If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*

Men are totally unable to repent of sin for salvation apart from the Spirit.

Job 14:4: *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one!*

Jeremiah 13:23: *Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.*

John 6:44: *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.*

John 6:65: *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."*

1 Corinthians 2:14: *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the first sin recorded in the Bible?

2. What effect did the first sin have on the rest of mankind?

3. Why is the first sin called 'original?' Why is it a legal issue?

4. What is the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism on the issue of 'the total depravity of man?'

5. Can man as a sinner do good works unto his own salvation?

6. What is meant by the phrase *'bondage of the will'* or *'the will of man is in slavery to sin'*?

7. Is man an autonomous being according to the Scripture? Explain.

Chapter Four

Divine Election Or Human Decision?

Arminians teach that it is man, not God, who chooses in the matter of salvation. They maintain, in effect, that God elects those who elect Him. God ratifies the choices of men; His election is conditional.

Calvinism, on the other hand, claims that election is unconditional. It is based on nothing “foreseen” in man. It is one hundred percent the work of God. The doctrine of election is part of the broader doctrine of God’s absolute sovereignty which was discussed in chapter two.

There are several erroneous concepts concerning what Calvinism teaches regarding election. First, election is not salvation. Election precedes salvation. The Father has elected certain persons *unto* salvation *in Christ* from all eternity. Paul writes: “*He [God] chose us [the elect saints] in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him*” (Ephesians 1:4). Election is an action that takes place supra-history, whereas salvation takes place in history. The latter occurs at the time an individual confesses Christ as Savior and Lord (Romans 10:9-10).

Second, election does not mean “*to ratify*” as in Arminianism; rather, it means “*to select or choose out of*”. Thus, when we speak of election in relation to God and salvation, we speak of that which God is doing, not man. God chooses His “*elect*.” All men are worthy of eternal death, but God elected a certain number unto salvation before the foundation of the world.

Third, as alluded to above, God’s election is not due to His foresight or foreknowledge of whether or not certain men will choose Him. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* states: “*Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions; yet hath He not decreed anything because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.*”⁹

As we have already seen, the whole human race is guilty in Adam’s sin. All men are born dead in sin and incapable of doing anything that pleases God (Ephesians 2:1; Romans 8:7-8; Psalm 51:5; 58:3). They do not have the ability to choose God. He chooses them.

Herein is a serious difference between Calvinism and Arminianism. According to the latter, God, in His divine foresight, looked down through the corridors of time and saw all of those who would choose salvation in Jesus Christ. Having this divine foreknowledge, He then ratified certain men’s choices of Him.

Romans 8:29 is the classic passage which addresses the issue of God’s foreknowledge: “*For those whom God foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.*” Is the Arminian understanding of foreknowledge in this verse that of Paul’s? Is the apostle merely speaking of divine prescience? Not at all! Verse twenty-eight, which precedes the verse under discussion, gives us the answer: “*We know that in all things, God works for the good of those that love Him; those who have been called according to His purpose.*” The whole order of salvation, as found in Romans 8:28-30, turns on the word “*purpose*” in verse twenty-eight. And it is God’s purpose, not man’s. This is of utmost significance.

What, then, does the word “*foreknow*” mean? It is practically synonymous with “*forelove*.” Notice that in Genesis 4:1, we read that: “*Adam knew his wife Eve.*” Here the word “*know*” is used of the intimate relationship between man and wife. The same usage is found in Luke 1:34, where Mary relates to the angel Gabriel that she has never (literally in the Greek text) “*known*” a man; that is, she has never had sexual intercourse with anyone. In Matthew 7:23, speaking of some unbelievers, Jesus says: “*And then I will declare unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of iniquity.*” Does the Lord mean that He never knew who these men were? As the sovereign ruler of the universe, the one who gives life and breath to all mankind, does Jesus Christ not know who these people are? Is this possible? Of course not! What He means is that He never loved them with a saving love.

Know, as it is used in this sense, is that intimate relationship which exists between God and His elect, based solely on His electing grace. Regarding the biblical usage of “*foreknowledge*” in Romans 8:29, John Murray writes: “*It means ‘whom He set His regard upon’ or ‘whom He knew from eternity with distinguishing affection and delight’ and is virtually equivalent to ‘whom He foreloved.’*”¹⁰ James Boice observes that in Scripture, “*The word foreknowledge itself is never used in reference to events or actions—that is, as advance knowledge of what one would or might do—but always of persons, whose lives are affected by that foreknowledge rather than the other way around.*”¹¹

To be sure, election is according to foreknowledge, but not foresight. Obviously, any Christian will affirm that God, as the sovereign Master of the universe, knows all things and thus foreknows all things. But God knows all things because He is the Creator of all, and everything exists according to His sovereign decretive will. He knows and foreknows all things from all eternity simply because He is God and has foreordained or decreed all that will ever come to pass. Logically, to insist that God merely knows

by looking into the future is to insist that God is not sovereign. Such, of course, is not the God of the Bible. What then is election? Boettner writes:

God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation, before the foundation of the world, rested solely on His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause, of God's choice. Election, therefore, was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus, God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.¹²

There are a number of Scripture passages which support the Calvinist doctrine of divine election. Ephesians 1:4, which is one of the strongest verses in the Bible on this subject, has already been quoted above. In this verse we read that it is God who does the choosing from all eternity. Likewise, in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, Paul states: *"But we should always give thanks to God for you, brothers, beloved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."* Again, it is God who has chosen the Thessalonians, not *vice versa*.

In Acts 13 we read of Paul's missionary activities in Pisidian Antioch (vv. 13-52). When the Gentiles heard his message of salvation in Jesus Christ alone they rejoiced: *"they were glad and honored the Word of the Lord; and all of those appointed unto eternal life believed"* (v. 48). Notice that those who believed were those who had been chosen by God to believe.

In Romans 9:10-13, Paul teaches that even before Jacob and Esau were born, or had done anything good or bad, God had chosen the former and rejected the latter. For what reason? *“In order that God’s purpose in election might stand”* (v. 11). The natural question then is: *“Is God unjust?”* (v.14); *“God forbid,”* says Paul: (v.14). *“For He [God] says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion; so it does not depend on man’s will or effort, but on God’s mercy”* (vv. 15-16). How much more obvious could the apostle make it? God’s election is unconditional.

In Revelation 17:8 we read of those *“whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world”* (see also 13:8). Several things should be noticed in this passage. First, some names have already been written in the book of life before the foundation of the world and some have not. Will any be added? None! Will any be lost? None! The elect and the non-elect have been predetermined from all eternity. There is an absolute fixity to the number. It should be carefully noted that this is true in both Calvinism and Arminianism.

Now, as in the Arminian schema, if God foresees all who will choose Him and ratifies their choice by writing down their names in the book of life, can any more be saved than those that He foresees? Of course not! Were that possible, then God would fail to be God. Something would have escaped His knowledge.

Thus, there is no difference in the number of elect and non-elect, the saved and unsaved, in either Arminianism or Calvinism. The number is set from all eternity. No one can change it. The only difference is in who does the choosing. Either God saves men by election unto Jesus Christ, or men save themselves by willing themselves unto Jesus Christ. The Bible asserts that God is the author of salvation: *“Salvation is of Jehovah”* (Jonah 2:9). In John 1:12-13 we read: *“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His*

name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

God has an elect people.

Deuteronomy 10:14-15: Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it. 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.

Psalm 33:12: Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance.

Psalm 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.

Matthew 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.

Matthew 22:14: For many are called, but few are chosen.

Luke 18:7: And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?

Romans 8:28-30: 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.

Romans 8:33: *Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.*

Titus 1:1: *Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness.*

1 Peter 1:12: *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.*

It is God who does the choosing of individuals unto salvation by Grace.

John 15:16: *You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.*

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.*

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.*

Romans 9:10-24: *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." What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? 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, and 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?

Ephesians 1:5: Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

Ephesians 2:10: For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Philippians 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.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14: 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, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the difference between the Arminian and Calvinistic view of divine election?

2. Is election salvation? Explain your answer.

3. Is election according to foreknowledge or foresight? What does the Bible teach and what is the difference between these two views?

4. What is meant by the term 'foreknowledge?'

Chapter Five

The Atonement Of Christ

Calvinism maintains that the atonement of Jesus Christ was sufficient to save all men, but it was only efficient in redeeming the elect of God—those whom the Father had chosen from all eternity (Ephesians 1:4). Thus, the atonement was limited in its efficacy. As Boettner observes: *“It was an objective work accomplished in history which removed all legal barriers against those to whom it was to be applied.”*³ Calvinists assert, along with Scripture, that the Spirit of God subjectively applies the merits of Christ’s atonement to the hearts of those for whom the Savior died.

Arminians have long accused Calvinists of limiting the power of the atonement. This is a false accusation. The historical faith teaches that Christ’s atonement fulfills exactly what God has decreed for it to accomplish. The Lord Jesus Christ stated: *“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and those who come to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me, I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day”* (John 6:37-39).

As seen, Calvinism does teach a limited or particular atonement. The limitation, however, is not in the power of salvation, but in the purpose of salvation. The Reformed Christian

holds that the atonement is limited in **efficiency**, not **sufficiency**. That is, Christ's atoning sacrifice is sufficient to save all, but it is only efficient to save the elect. There is no lack of power whatsoever.

Likewise, the Calvinist teaches that all men benefit from the atonement indirectly. They are recipients of what has been called "*the goodness of God*" (God's gracious dealing with all mankind, as per Matthew 5:45 and 1 Timothy 4:10) due to the fact that Christ's atonement reversed the effects of the fall. The full sufficiency of the atonement is the basis for the universal offer of the gospel (John 3:16; Matthew 11:28-30). Calvinists also believe that the atonement is fully sufficient in redeeming a fallen world (Colossians 1:20), albeit not all persons in the world. That is, God has not left His world in a state of chaos (Genesis 3:14-19; Romans 8:19-25); rather, Christ has come to reverse the effects that the fall had on the entire cosmos.

Christ's atonement is also universal in that it is for "*all sorts of men*." That is, He died for men of every nation, tribe, and tongue. In Revelation 5:9, we read: "*they sang a new song, saying, worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break the seals; for Thou wast slain, and by Thy blood didst purchase for God, men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation*." This is the world of men for whom Christ died (cf. 1 John 2:2; John 11:51-52). It is a world without distinction! It is a world in which "*there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:28). But it is not a world without exception, as in universalism, i.e., a world in which all will be saved. There is a big difference between sufficiency and efficiency.

The Reformed Christian understands that God is absolutely sovereign, and that He will accomplish all of His purposes. He also recognizes that God has not been pleased to save all men (Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:11-15). The Calvinist thus concludes, via Scripture, that Christ did not die to save all men.

How could Christ say that none of those whom the Father

had given Him would be lost, unless He died to save them? Further, how can He do the will of His Father if He fails to save those given to Him by the Father? Will the Lord Jesus Christ turn in defeat on the last day and confess that He failed to accomplish the will of the Father, i.e., that He could not save all those whom the Father had given Him? Is it really conceivable that Christ shed His blood for those who were already in hell at the time of the atonement (e.g., Esau or Pharaoh; cf. Romans 9:10-18)?

Arminians usually counter the above argument by asserting that even though Christ did die for all men, they still need to believe (i.e., put their trust in the finished work of the Messiah). In other words, the atoning work has been accomplished, and the sins of mankind forgiven, but man must accept this for himself. This, however, is not biblically consistent.

We read in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19: *“All these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”* How can it be that God does not count the *“trespasses [of fallen men] against them”* in Christ’s atonement, and yet He sends many to hell? The Arminian would answer, *“unbelief!”* However, is not unbelief a trespass and not to be counted against them? Or maybe we need to say that Christ’s death was not intended to forgive all the sins of all men, just some of their sins. Which is it? Some or all?

The Arminian finds himself in a theological dilemma. Either all sins (including unbelief) have been atoned for and no one will be lost, or not all sins have been atoned for and all men will give an account for some of their sin, thus, no one will be saved. This is a serious and unsolvable problem in the Arminian view of Christ’s atonement.

A proper knowledge of the biblical doctrine of justification will help in our understanding of the nature of Christ’s atonement. Justification defines the saving significance of Christ’s work in

behalf of His people. It is a legal term which refers to the fact that God **declares** (not makes) men righteous (See Appendix C, Justification by Faith). Justification is imputed, not imparted or infused. When Christ atoned for sin upon the cross, He died once for sin, and only once as expressed by the Apostle Peter: *“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”* (1 Peter 3:18).

The necessary work required for the justification of lost sinners was completed at that time. It was/is a *fait accompli* (already accomplished).

Therefore, nothing can change the legal status of the person for whom Christ died in the atonement. The author of Hebrews writes: *“For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like the high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself”* (7:26-27). And again: *“He [Christ] entered once for all into the Most Holy Place by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption”* (9:12). Notice that redemption *was* obtained in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus.

Now if Christ’s work upon the cross is the work which God has accepted for the justification of sinners, and God legally declares that He will not count the transgressions of those for whom Christ died against them, how can they ever be lost? Those for whom the Lord Jesus died are of necessity going to be saved. Atonement was made for all of their sins, including unbelief. If He died for all men, then all will be saved. Either their sin is atoned for or it is not. How can a perfectly just God promise one thing and not deliver? What kind of God is this? Certainly, it is not the God of Holy Scripture. The Calvinist doctrine of limited atonement is the only answer. Christ atoned for the sins of the elect.

Arminianism teaches that Christ did not come to die in behalf of certain men, rather, He came **to make** salvation possible for all men. But, as we have already seen, this is not what the Bible teaches. Matthew 1:21 reads: "*He [Christ] will save His people from their sins.*" Luke 19:10 states: "*For the Son of man came to seek and save that which is lost.*" In I Timothy 1:15, Paul writes: "*The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*" The Lord Jesus did not come to make salvation possible; He came to save.

There are a number of biblical passages which teach the Calvinist doctrine of Christ's limited atonement. Some have already been mentioned. In Matthew 1:21 we read that Christ came to save His people from their sins. In Hebrews 9:12, we see that Christ's sacrificial work obtained eternal redemption for the sins of the elect. In Ephesians 5:25 and Acts 20:28, Paul states that Christ died for His body, the church.

Jesus Himself taught that His atonement was to be limited to His sheep. In John 10, the Lord claims that His sheep hear His voice (vv. 3,27); they know Him (v.14). They are the ones for whom He lays down His life (vv. 11,15). He does not die for those who do not trust Him; they are not His sheep (v. 26). J. Gresham Machen once said: "*When Christ sets out to save a people, He saves them.*"¹⁴

Perhaps the strongest argument for the Calvinist view of limited atonement comes from the biblical doctrine of appropriations, which asserts that the three persons of the Triune Godhead always work in perfect harmony. In other words, one member of the Trinity cannot be involved in work that would be contradictory to the work of the other two. If this latter situation were the case, we would not have one God with three persons; rather, we would have three persons and three separate Gods—an ancient heresy. The Bible teaches us that God is not a God of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). There is a harmonious working relationship amongst the Trinity. All three members are always in

perfect accord with one another.

This being the case, it is not possible to maintain that Christ died on behalf of the sins of all men. That is, the Father has only chosen some to be saved (Ephesians 1:4); the Spirit only regenerates and seals a certain number (Titus 3:56; Ephesians 1:13-14); and the Son only redeems that same number of persons (Ephesians 1:7). They are the ones for whom He died—the elect of God.

Arminians counter the above cited Scripture verses with others, such as 1 Timothy 2:36, “*God...wants all men to be saved... Christ Jesus gave Himself a ransom for all men*”, and 2 Peter 3:9, “*He [God] does not want anyone of you to perish, but for all to come to repentance.*” However, when these verses are studied in their proper context they do not teach a universal atonement. In the former passage, Paul is merely claiming that God wants all sorts of men, i.e., Jews and Gentiles, to be saved (cf. 1 Timothy 2:1,2,7; and Romans 3:29). In 2 Peter 3:9, on the other hand, is addressed to those within the church. Thus, Peter is merely supporting the doctrine of limited atonement. God is not slow about His promises—He wants all of His body, the church, to come to repentance. None of them will perish.

Another area of Scripture that Arminians point to in support of universal atonement is that of the “*whosoever will*” passages. John 3:16, for example, reads: “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him may not perish, but have eternal life.*”

Now the Calvinist is in full agreement with the Arminian here—“*whosoever will*” come to Christ, will be saved (cf. John 6:37). The problem lies in the fact that John 3:16 and other passages like it say nothing about who is *capable* of coming to Christ. On the other hand, John 6:44 is very explicit: “*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.*” The “*whosoever will*” verses do not teach a universal atonement.

All those who come to Christ come willingly. The question

is not are they willing, but what has caused them willingly to come? Was it God or something inherent in man? The Bible says that God is the author of salvation and of man's willingness to come to Christ.

It is the authors' opinion that the doctrine of limited atonement is the most difficult one of the "*Five Points Of Calvinism*" for Arminians to accept. Interestingly, Arminians also hold to a form of limited atonement. David Steele and Curtis Thomas write:

The Arminians also place a limitation on the atoning work of Christ, but one of a much different nature. They hold that Christ's saving work was designed to make possible the salvation of all men on the condition that they believe, but that Christ's death in itself did not actually secure or guarantee salvation for anyone.

Since all men will not be saved as the result of Christ's redeeming work, a limitation must be admitted. Either the atonement was limited in that it was designed to secure salvation for certain sinners but not for others, or it was limited in that it was not intended to secure salvation for any, but was designed only to make it possible for God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe. In other words, one must limit its design either in extent (it was not intended for all) or effectiveness (it did not secure salvation for any). As Boettner so aptly observes, for the Calvinist, the atonement is like a narrow bridge which goes all the way across the stream; for the Arminian it is like a great wide bridge that goes only halfway across.¹⁵

In actuality, it is the Arminian who depersonalizes the atonement and renders it powerless.

The question before us is this: "*For whom did Christ die?*"

There are only four possible answers:

- 1) Christ died for all of the sins of all men: if this is the correct answer to our question, then, of necessity, all men will be saved. This is inescapable. We have already seen that Christ obtained eternal redemption for those for whom He died. The Bible teaches that those for whom Christ died will legally be declared righteous. They will be justified; their sins will be forgiven. This is the doctrine of universalism, which the Word of God refutes. Matthew 25:31-46 and Revelation 20:11-15, and other passages as well, speak of a final judgment when some will be sent to hell (see especially Matthew 25:41,46).
- 2) He died for some of the sins of all men: if this is the answer, then all men must pay the price for those sins which were not atoned for in the death of Christ. Yet, the Bible teaches that just one sin against an eternal God is worthy of eternal punishment (James 2:10; Galatians 3:10).
- 3) He died for none of the sins of all men: if this is the case, then obviously no one could possibly be saved. Again, every sin of every saved person must be atoned for.
- 4) He died for all of the sins of some men: this is the only conceivable answer. We have seen that the Bible teaches this view of the atonement of Christ over and over again. Those for whom Christ died, and they alone, will be saved. They are the ones whom the Father has chosen from all eternity (Ephesians 1:4); they are the

ones whom the Spirit regenerates and seals (Titus 3:5-6; Ephesians 1:13-14); they are the ones whom the Son redeems (Ephesians 1:7).

Steele and Thomas write:

Historical or main line Calvinism has consistently maintained that Christ's redeeming work was definite in design and accomplishment—that it was intended to render complete satisfaction for certain specified sinners and that it actually secured salvation for these individuals and for no one else. The salvation which Christ earned for His people includes everything involved in bringing them into a right relationship with God, including gifts of faith and repentance. Christ did not die simply to make it possible for God to pardon sinners. Neither does God leave it up to sinners as to whether or not Christ's work will be effective. On the contrary, all for whom Christ sacrificed Himself will be saved infallibly. Redemption, therefore, was designed to bring to pass God's purpose of election.¹⁶

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

Christ died for the sins of His people and not for the sins of everyone in the world.

Matthew 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.*

Matthew 20:28: *Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*

John 10:24-29: *Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. 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."*

John 11:50-53: *"Nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.*

John 17:1-11: *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, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. 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. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. 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. I pray for them. I do not pray for*

the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. 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.”

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.

Ephesians 1:3-12: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 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, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 5:25-27: Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Hebrews 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.*

Hebrews 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.*

Revelation 5:9: *And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation."*

QUESTIONS:

1. What does Calvinism teach about the sufficiency of Christ's atonement?

2. How is the atonement of Christ efficient?

3. Did Christ die for all of the sins of all men?

4. What is the dilemma that confronts the Arminian concerning universal atonement?

5. How is the 'doctrine of the atonement' affected by the 'doctrine of justification'?

6. What is the doctrine of appropriations?

Chapter Six

Calling Men to Christ

In our study of Calvinism we have seen that God is sovereign over all things in His universe, including the salvation or reprobation of man. All men, women, and children born into this world are dead in sin and are thus incapable of doing anything to merit their salvation. If they are going to be saved, it is God who must save them. God, in His sovereign will, has from all eternity graciously chosen some to be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. These are the ones for whom Christ died.

All that the Father has chosen and given to the Son will be saved; that is, they will come to Christ in repentance and faith and He will receive them into His Kingdom (John 6:37). They will come to the Son because they are irresistibly drawn by the Father (John 6:44). In other words, once God has regenerated the hearts of His elect (John 3:3-8), then they will no longer hate the light and love the darkness (John 3:19). Rather, the regenerate will trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (John 3:21).

The Bible says that the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit is so great that it cannot be resisted. Those who have been born again are new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). In John 6, Jesus says: *“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me... everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him comes to Me...*

the Spirit gives life...I told you that no one can come to Me unless the Father enables him to do so" (vv. 37,45,63,64). Likewise, in Psalm 110:3, we read: "*Thy people will offer themselves freely on the day of Thy power.*" This is irresistible, saving grace.

How then do we call men to Christ? The answer is simple—biblically! This means that we do not adopt humanistic methodology in our evangelism. For example, altar calls are unbiblical. There is not a single altar call in the whole of Scripture. The idea that one must "*come forward*" to be saved cheapens the doctrines of grace and presents a truncated gospel.

Neither do we present unbiblical doctrines to the nonbeliever in our evangelistic endeavors. Pithy sayings such as: "*God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life*" and/or "*Christ died for you*" are improper. We have already seen that Christ did not die to save all men, and that God does not "have a wonderful plan" for those who reject the gospel.

How then does the Calvinist call men to Christ? By preaching the gospel as presented in the Word of God. The Reformed Christian knows that it is not his job to save anyone. That is God's job. The job of the Christian is to faithfully present the truth of Christ crucified to the nonbeliever as we see in 1 Corinthians 2:12: "*And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*"

The Great Commission mandate given by the Lord to His church is full orb'd in nature: "*Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*" (Matthew 28:19-20). Any presentation of the gospel that fails to stress the whole counsel of God—all that Christ has given us in His Word—is unbiblical evangelism. Salvation is more than merely "*winning souls*".

True evangelism calls for repentance, faith, and a radical change of lifestyle. We read in 1 Peter 1:2 that true Christians are those “*who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that [they] may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled by His blood.*” James writes, “*therefore, rid yourselves of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly receive the Word implanted which is able to save your souls*” (1:21). Paul writes, “*Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the lusts of the flesh*” (Romans 13:14).

Continual sin and biblical Christianity do not mix. Nowhere does the Bible teach that God accepts men “*just as they are*”. God accepts those who are broken and contrite of heart (Psalm 51:17; Isaiah 57:15); those who tremble at His Word (Isaiah 66:2).

The Bible teaches that there is a twofold call for men to come to Christ. The first is referred to as the outward or external call. This call is the message that goes out to all who listen to the preaching of the gospel. Jesus called on all men to come to Him in Matthew 11:28-30: “*Come unto Me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*” (It is noteworthy that Christ preached the doctrine of election in verses 25-27, just prior to extending the outward or external call.)

Calvinism maintains that there are three elements which are essential in making up the outward call:

- 1) A biblical presentation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God incarnate: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.* (John 1:1-3) *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:14)

- 2) A call to repent of sin and by faith to accept Christ as Savior and Lord: *Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*
(Acts 2:38)

- 3) The promise of the forgiveness of sins in Him alone; Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father: *: Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6) Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)*

As stated, the outward or general call goes out to all men who hear the gospel message, even those whom God has chosen to condemn. But this call is resistible. Many who hear the gospel reject it to their own damnation.

The second call is the effectual call. This call is irresistible because the Spirit of God regenerates the heart of the sinner so that he will receive the call and come to Christ. This internal call is made only to the elect, and it cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. Boettner writes: *“The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God’s grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.”*¹⁷

On the subject of the effectual call, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* states:

All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature,

to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh, renewing their wills, and by His almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.¹⁸ (Also see: London (Baptist) Confession of Faith, 1689, Chapter 10, Sections 1 and 2).

Notice that the Westminster Confession properly stresses the preaching of the Word in the effectual call. God has chosen this means as the normal way that people are drawn to Christ. In his epistle to the Romans, Paul writes, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes...Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ"* (1:16; 10:17). In 1 Corinthians 1:18,21, the apostle states, *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved by it, it is the power of God...For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him, God was well pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe."*

When the Word of God is preached to the elect, God, in His perfect timing, graciously draws them, by His Spirit, into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. This is confirmed by a number of biblical passages, two of which are noted. In 1 Thessalonians 1:5, Paul writes, *"Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also*

with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction.” In 2 Thessalonians 2:13, the apostle claims, *“God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and belief in the truth.”* Notice that in each case it is the Spirit of God who effectually applies the truth of the gospel message to the heart of the elect sinner and draws him to Christ.

We should further note, that the effectual call is irresistible because the saints are called into union with Christ: *“God is faithful, by whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”* (1 Corinthians 1:9). This union is a spiritual union: *“He who is united with the Lord is one Spirit with Him”* (1 Corinthians 6:17; cf. John 15:18; Romans 6:5).

The often overlooked doctrine of the believer’s union with Jesus Christ is most important for us to understand. Notice that Christians are:

- 1) Chosen in Christ: *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.* (Ephesians 1:4)
- 2) Blessed with every spiritual blessing in Him: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.*(Ephesians 1:3)
- 3) Predestined to adoption as sons through Him: *Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.* (Ephesians 1:5)

- 4) Redeemed in Him: *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.* (Ephesians 1:7)
- 5) Sealed by the Holy Spirit in Christ: *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.* (Ephesians 1:13)
- 6) Made alive and spiritually resurrected in Him: *Even when we were dead in trespasses, He 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.* (Ephesians 2:5-6)
- 7) Made complete in Him: *For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.* (Colossians 2:9-10)
- 8) The believer's life is hidden in Christ: *For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.* (Colossians 3:3)
- 9) When the Christian dies, he dies in Christ: *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.* (1 Thessalonians 4:14-16)

- 10) And finally, the Christian is physically resurrected and glorified in Christ: *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.* (1 Corinthians 15:22) *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.* (Romans 8:17)

In the words of John Murray:

*Union with Christ is a very inclusive subject. It embraces the wide span of salvation from its ultimate source in the eternal election of God to its final fruition in the glorification of the elect. It is not simply a phase of the application of redemption; it underlies every aspect of redemption both in its accomplishment and in its application. Union with Christ binds all together and insures that to all for whom Christ has purchased redemption He effectively applies and communicates the same.*¹⁹

How then is the church to call men to Christ? By faithfully preaching the whole counsel of God and not just a truncated version of it. God has promised His church that when she is faithful in proclaiming His Word, He will make it efficacious: *“So is My Word which goes forth from My mouth, it will not return void, but it will accomplish that which I purpose; it will prosper in the thing for which I have sent it”* (Isaiah 55:11).

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

Salvation is wrought in the sinner by the work of God the Holy Spirit and not man.

Deuteronomy 30:6: *And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.*

Ezekiel 36:26-27: *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*

Ezekiel 11:19: *Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh.*

Matthew 11:25-27: *At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. 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."*

Matthew 16:15-17: *He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."*

John 6:44-45: *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.*

John 6:64-65: *"But there are some of you who do not believe." For*

Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. 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."

John 1:12-13: But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 3:38: Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 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.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Titus 3:5: Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTIONS:

1. Is man able to resist the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit? Explain.

2. Why don't Reformed churches use altar calls in evangelism?

3. What is the external call of the gospel?

4. What is meant by the effectual call of the gospel?

5. Which comes first: regeneration or faith? Explain.

Chapter Seven

Perseverance, or Once Saved Always Saved?

Is it possible for a person who has been saved by grace to fall from grace? Arminianism says yes, Calvinism says no.

According to Arminian theology, salvation is accomplished through the combined efforts of God and man. God takes the initiative, but man must respond. This response is the determining factor of salvation. Since man has determined, by himself, to come to Christ, then he can also, by himself, turn away from Christ and fall from grace.

According to Reformed and Calvinistic theology, it is the Triune God who is the sole Author of salvation from first to last. Thus, once a person is truly born again, he can never fall from grace; it is the power of God which keeps him to the end. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* reads:

They whom God hath 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. 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 efficiency of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof. Nevertheless they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalence of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and for a time continue therein: whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve the Holy Spirit; come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts; have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others; and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.²⁰ (See also: London (Baptist) Confession of Faith, 1689, Chapter 17, Sections 1-3).

The Westminster Confession stresses the fact that believers are kept in faith by the power of the Triune God; yet they are responsible to persevere. Christianity is not fatalistic. Man is not a robot; rather, he is an image bearer of the most high God. Man must persevere, but all the while he must recognize that it is the grace of God preserving him to the end. In Philippians 1:6, Paul writes, *"I am confident that He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus."* He goes on in 2:12b-13, to state, *"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is working in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure."* And in Psalm 37:28, we read, *"Jehovah...does not forsake His saints; they are preserved forever."*

In John 10:27-29, the Lord Jesus says, *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they follow Me. I give them eternal life,*

and they shall never perish, and no one will ever snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand." Notice that it is Christ who gives the sheep (believers) eternal life, and it is the Father and the Son that promise the sheep that they will never perish; eternal life is theirs in Christ (vv. 28-29). Nevertheless, the believer is responsible to hear the Word of Christ and to obey Him (v. 27).

The Westminster Confession also says that the doctrine of perseverance does not mean that true believers will not suffer trial and tribulation. Neither does it mean that the saints will not sometimes fall into grievous sins. Sins which will bring temporal judgments from God. But true Christians will eventually turn back to God, and have restored fellowship with Him. King David is one such example.

David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). Yet he fell into deep sin with Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite (2 Samuel 11). When the king was confronted with his sin by Nathan the prophet, he repented and received God's forgiveness (2 Samuel 12:13). But he still had to undergo the temporal judgments which came as a consequence of the sin. Second Samuel 12:14-20:26 is the divine commentary on this fact.

Another strong reason to adhere to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is the corollary doctrine of adoption. The Bible teaches that those who have come to Christ and been justified, have been adopted into a filial relationship with the Father. They have the privilege of calling Him *abba*—an Aramaic term of intimacy, equivalent to the English word "daddy" (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5). J. I. Packer writes: "*What is a Christian? The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God for his Father.*"²¹

It is important to note that the Bible teaches that adoption is a present reality. 1 John 3:12, reads, "*Behold what manner of love*

the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God;" Adoption into the family of God is not something that the believer has to wait for; he has sonship now. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* states:

All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for His only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption: by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God; have His name put upon them, receive the Spirit of Adoption; have access to the throne of grace with boldness; are enabled to cry, Abba, Father; are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by Him as Father; yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation.²² (See also: London (Baptist) Confession of Faith, 1689, Chapter 12, Section 1).

Notice that the Westminster Confession stresses the fatherly care of Almighty God for those who are already partakers of a *filial* (son or daughter) relationship with Him. They belong to Him; they are His children, and He will never cast them off. They will persevere!

From what has been studied above, it should be obvious that the Calvinist doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is not one and the same thing with "*once saved, always saved.*" This latter pseudo-Christian doctrine maintains that once a person has made a profession of faith—he is saved. He may (basically) live as he so pleases—it really doesn't matter—because "*once saved, always saved.*"

A major tenet of the "*once saved, always saved*" doctrine is the concept that Christ can be one's Savior, while at the same time not being his Lord. This teaching is especially prevalent in

Dispensational circles. The *Scofield Reference Bible*, for example, claims that there are two kinds of Christians: the spiritual and the carnal (cf. Scofield notes on 1 Corinthians 2:14). The latter have not yielded to the Lordship of Christ, but they are nevertheless saved.

Another Dispensational theologian, Charles Ryrie, states, “*The question is simply this: does one have to make Christ Lord of his life or be willing to do so in order to be saved?*” Ryrie’s answer is NO! ²³

This kind of theology is far from biblical. A mere profession of faith saves no one. Reformed theology, along with the Word of God, has always maintained that a lack of commitment to the Lordship of Christ in one’s life, constitutes a lack of saving faith. A. W. Pink writes, “*No one can receive Christ as his Savior while he rejects Him as Lord.*”²⁴ Buswell says that saving faith, “*...is not... unquestioning credulity, but a positive reaction of a man’s whole being towards Jesus Christ as the Son of God.*”²⁵

We have seen that Paul admonished the Philippians to “*work out [their] own salvation with fear and trembling.*” Then in Romans 10:9 he states, “*If you confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*” This is Lordship theology.

Likewise, Peter calls on the saints to “*be diligent to make [their] calling and election sure*” (2 Peter 1:10). The author of Hebrews claims that those who are not “*pursuing holiness*” will not see the Lord (12:14). In Luke 6:46, the Lord Jesus Christ asks, “*Why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and then not do what I tell you?*” These passages strongly warn against a non-Lordship view of saving faith.

There are several biblical examples which show that a mere profession of faith does not make one a Christian. In Acts 8 we read of Simon the Magician who made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ (v. 13). But by the end of the chapter he had turned away from God (vv. 20-21). His profession was spurious.

Another example is that of Demas, who worked in the gospel ministry for years with Paul and Luke (see Colossians 4:14; Philemon

24). But he later abandoned his Christianity for the things of the world (2 Timothy 4:10). Steele and Thomas write:

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints does not maintain that all who profess the Christian faith are certain of heaven. It is saints — those who are set apart by the Spirit — who persevere to the end. It is believers — those who are given true, living faith in Christ — who are secure and safe in Him. Many who profess to believe fall away, but they do not fall from grace for they were never in grace. True believers do fall into temptations, and they commit grievous sins, but these sins do not cause them to lose their salvation or separate them from Christ.²⁶

This does not in any way imply that Calvinism teaches that good works merit salvation. Nothing could be further from the truth. In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul says, “*For by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not of your own doing; it is the free gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.*”

Reformed theology maintains with Paul, that justification is by grace through faith in Christ alone. Martin Luther called this doctrine “*the doctrine by which the church stands or falls*”. Calvin called it the “*hinge of the Reformation.*”²⁷

However, Calvinism agrees with Paul’s conclusion to the Ephesians 2:8-10 passage. Verse ten reads, “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*” Good works, says the apostle, do not merit salvation, but they are necessarily going to be there if one has truly been saved. They are works of necessity, not merit (James 2:26). The battle cry of the Reformation was that of “*justification by grace through faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone.*” Good works will of necessity follow saving faith.

A note should be made that the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints does not stand on its own. It is a part of God’s overall

work of salvation in each and every one of His elect children. Boettner observers:

This doctrine does not stand alone but is a necessary part of the Calvinistic system of theology. The doctrines of election and efficacious [irresistible] grace logically imply the certain salvation of those who receive these blessings. If God has chosen men absolutely and unconditionally to eternal life, and if His Spirit effectually applies to them the benefits of redemption, the inescapable conclusion is that these persons shall be saved.²⁸

Finally, the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints guarantees that the truly born again Christian will reach the final stage of salvation which is glorification. John Murray writes:

Glorification is the final phase of the application of redemption. It is that which brings to completion the process which begins in effectual calling. Indeed it is the completion of the whole process of redemption. For glorification means the attainment of the goal to which the elect of God were predestined in the eternal purpose of the Father and it involves the consummation of the redemption secured and procured by the vicarious work of Christ.²⁹

Glorification occurs in two stages:

- 1) When the believer dies, Christ comes to take him home to glory (John 14:1-3). There he will be with all of the saints (Hebrews 12:22), and present with the Lord forever (2 Corinthians 5:8). This stage will be without the resurrected body.

- 2) There is a second stage which reaches even greater glory. This stage will occur on the final day, when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to usher in the kingdom of glory. On that day, Christian man will be clothed with his resurrection body: “*When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality*” (1 Corinthians 15:54). Paul speaks to this fully in 1 Corinthians 15:20-58 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17.

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* states in Chapter 32, Sections 1-3:

The bodies of men after death return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls, (which neither die nor sleep,) having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies; and the souls of the wicked in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.

At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls for ever.

The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonour; the bodies of the just, by His Spirit, unto honour, and be made conformable to His own glorious body.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

God saves his people for eternity and they shall not lose their salvation.

Isaiah 43:1-3: *But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place.*

Isaiah 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.*

Jeremiah 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.*

John 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.*

John 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.*

John 6:35-40: *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. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.'

John 6:47: Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.

John 10:27-30: 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. I and My Father are one.

John 17:11-12: 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. 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, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

Romans 8:29-30: 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.

Romans 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.

2 Timothy 4:18: And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!

Hebrews 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.

Hebrews 10:14: For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

1 Peter 1:3-5: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 John 5:11-13: And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

1 John 5:20: And we know that the Son of God has come and has

given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

QUESTIONS:

1. According to Arminian theology, why is man capable of losing his salvation?

2. What does Calvinism teach about eternal salvation?

3. What is the difference between the doctrines of 'perseverance' and 'once saved always saved'?

4. What is meant by Lordship salvation and why is it important?

5. What are the two stages of glorification? Explain.

Chapter Eight

Divine Providence or Christian Humanism?

We have already studied the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in chapter two. There we saw that God is sovereign over every portion of His creation; He controls all areas of life. Nothing takes place outside of the decretive will of the Triune Deity.

The Bible teaches that God has created all things which have ever been or will ever be created (Genesis 1; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 11:3). He did this in the six day period of Genesis 1. But God did not create the universe and then withdraw from it, thus allowing it to run itself. Rather, He sovereignly guides and directs all things causing them to come to their appointed end.

Arminian theology holds that God is in absolute control of some things, but that He does not govern each and every minute detail of His universe. For example, Arminianism teaches that man is in control of his own spiritual destiny. This is little more than Christian humanism.

Calvinism, on the other hand, maintains that God is in absolute control of every single part of His universe, even the minutest details. *“He [God] works **all things** after the counsel of His will”* (Ephesians 1:11). What we are studying here is the doctrine of God’s providence.

Louis Berkhof writes: “*Divine providence is that work of God by which He preserves all His creatures, is active in all that transpires in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end.*”³⁰ The Westminster Confession of Faith claims:

*God, the great Creator, of all things, doth 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.*³¹ (See also: London (Baptist) Confession of Faith, 1689, Chapter 5, Section 1).

Reformed theology maintains that there are three elements involved in divine providence: preservation, concurrence, and government.

- 1) Divine preservation is the continuous work of the Triune Deity wherein He upholds all things. The universe has its existence because of God and it continues to exist due to His divine power. All of creation is totally dependent on God. “*He [Christ] is upholding the universe by His powerful Word*” (Hebrews 1:3). “*He [Christ] is before all things, and in Him all things are held together*” (Colossians 1:17). “*If He [God] were to withdraw His Spirit...all flesh would perish*” (Job 34:14-15).
- 2) Divine concurrence is the work of God wherein He cooperates with all of His creation, causing it to act in accordance with His sovereign will. God is the first cause of all things; yet He uses second causes (e.g., the forces of nature, the will of man) to accomplish His

purposes. These second causes do not in anyway operate independently of God, rather they are in complete concurrence with His plan. *“Thou dost appoint darkness and nightfall comes...the young lions roar after their prey, they seek their food from God...when Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created; Thou dost renew the face of the ground”* (Psalm 104:20-21, 30).

- 3) Divine government is the work of God wherein He continually rules all things, to the point where they actually answer to the purpose of their existence. God’s government is universal in scope. He is King of His universe, and rules all things in it according to His good pleasure. *“Our God is in heaven, He does whatsoever He pleases”* (Psalm 115:3). *“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns”* (Revelation 19:6).

In short, Calvinism affirms that the Lord God almighty reigns over and controls all history; it is *“His-Story.”* We spoke of this in chapter two, but it needs to be mentioned again. The providence of God is all inclusive:

- 1) The entire universe at large is controlled by God. *The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, His sovereignty rules over all.* (Psalm 103:19)
- 2) The physical world is ruled by Him. *He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the labor of mankind, so that man may bring forth food from the earth.* (Psalm 104:14)
- 3) He also rules over the spiritual world. *He makes His angels winds, His servants are as flames of fire.* (Hebrews 1:7)

- 4) God rules over the animal kingdom. *Look at the birds of the air, they neither sow nor reap, nor do they gather into barns; yet your Father in heaven feeds them.* (Matthew 6:26)
- 5) God's hand directs the affairs of nations. *He makes nations great, then He destroys them; He enlarges the nations, then He leads them away.* (Job 12:23)
- 6) God superintends every part of life, from conception in the womb until death. *Thine eyes have beheld my unformed substance; and in Thy book they were written, all the days ordained for me, before one of them existed.* (Psalm 139:16)
- 7) God controls even those things which seem to be contingent. *The lot is cast into the lap; yet its every decision is from the Lord.* (Proverbs 16:33)
- 8) God sovereignly protects the righteous. He works all thing for their good. *We know that God works all things together for good for those who love Him; those who have been called according to His purpose.* (Romans 8:28)
- 9) God meets all the needs of His elect. *My God will supply all of your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 4:19)
- 10) God's providence brings about answers to prayer. *Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and it will be opened to you...how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him"* (Matthew 7:7,11).

- 11) God punishes the wicked. *“Upon the wicked He will rain fire coals and brimstone; a burning wind will be their portion. (Psalm 11:6)*

The doctrine of providence does not lead us to the hyper-Calvinist dogma of fatalism (see chapter ten); neither does it teach that God is the Author of sin (see chapter nine). Rather, it gives us the consolation that God is in absolute control of everything which occurs in His universe. Nothing happens by chance. God’s people can rest in the assurance that their Father rules sovereignly over all. Article XIII of The Belgic Confession of Faith reads:

We believe that the same good God, after He had created all things, did not forsake them up to fortune or chance, but that He rules and governs them according to His holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without His appointment; nevertheless, God neither is the Author of nor can be charged with the sins which are committed. For His power and goodness are so great and incomprehensible that He orders and executes His work in the most excellent and just manner, even then when devils and wicked men act unjustly. And as to what He does surpassing human understanding, we will not curiously inquire into farther than our capacity will admit of; but with the greatest humility and reverence adore the righteous judgments of God, which are hid from us, contenting ourselves that we are pupils of Christ, to learn those things which He has revealed to us in His Word, without transgressing these limits.

This doctrine affords us unspeakable consolation, since we are taught thereby nothing can befall us by chance, but by the direction of our most gracious and heavenly Father; who watches over us with a parental care, keeping all creatures so under His power that not a

hair of our head (for they are all numbered), nor a sparrow can fall to the ground without the will of our Father, in whom we do entirely trust; being persuaded that He so restrains the devil and all our enemies that without His will and permission they cannot hurt us.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

1 Chronicles 29:10-12: *Therefore David blessed the LORD before all the assembly; and David said: "Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all."*

Isaiah 14:24-27: *The LORD of hosts has sworn, saying, "Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, and as I have purposed, so it shall stand: That I will break the Assyrian in My land, and on My mountains tread him underfoot. Then his yoke shall be removed from them, and his burden removed from their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed against the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?"*

Isaiah 46:9-11: *Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,' Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.*

Hebrews 1:3: *Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*

Colossians 1:16-17: *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*

QUESTIONS:

1. What is meant by divine providence?

2. Why is Arminianism to be considered little more than a form of 'religious humanism?'

3. What are the three (3) elements of divine providence?

4. List the eleven (11) areas that God's providence rules over, as set forth in this chapter.

5. What is fatalism and how is it different from Calvinism?

6. How is Arminianism like fatalism?

Chapter Nine

Is God the Author of Sin?

The question before us is one which often arises with regard to Calvinism. The argument is stated as follows: *“If God is in absolute control of the universe, foreordaining all things, and sin exists in the world, then He must be the Author of sin.”* But this does not follow biblically.

What proof do we have that just because God foreordains or decrees something to happen (e.g., sin), that he *must force free moral agents* to carry it out? John Gerstner observes, *“We do not see that it is impossible for God to predestinate an act to come to pass by means of the deliberate choice of specific individuals.”*³² Gerstner is correct. There is no reason whatsoever that this cannot be the case. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* reads:

God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the Author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in

*His providence, that it extends itself to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, but such as has joined with it a most wise dispensation, to His own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceeds only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.*³³

(See also: London (Baptist) Confession of Faith, 1689, Chapter 3, Section 1, and Chapter 5, Section 4).

There is no question that sin is a part of God's plan in history. No Christian denies this. In fact, as per the Westminster Confession, sin has occurred in history as a part of God's decree. The Reformed Christian maintains that according to the Bible God has foreordained sin. For if sin was outside the plan of God, then we would have to maintain that God does not control all things, and that some things come into being apart from His sovereign will.

If this were the case, then sin, or that which brought sin into the world, would be more powerful than God. How much of history would be outside of the foreordained plan of God? The fall of Adam, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, etc., would be events which we would have to conclude were outside of the will of God.

One helpful thing for us to remember is that the Bible distinguishes between the secret will and the revealed or preceptive will of God. In Deuteronomy 29:29, we read, "*The secret things belong to Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may obey all of the words of this law.*" What Moses is saying here is that we cannot know the secret counsel of God; there are many things which He has not chosen to tell us. We do not have exhaustive knowledge. But God has given us the Bible (the revealed will), by which we are to live. This is the will of God which we are responsible to obey.

Scripture teaches that the secret and the revealed will of

God work in perfect harmony. For example, in Acts 2:23, we read that Jesus was “*delivered up according to the plan and foreknowledge of God*”; and yet Peter says, “*you crucified and killed [Him] by the hands of godless men.*” Notice that Christ’s crucifixion was according to the foreordained purpose of God—the secret will. But He accomplished it through the work of the ungodly—who violated the revealed will (i.e., the sixth commandment, as they had an innocent man [Christ] murdered).

God did not leave the salvation of His elect to chance. He decreed it to occur “*in the fullness of time*” and carried it out in a manner in which He is not to be considered the Author of the sin. God was the divine first cause, whereas godless men were the second cause. Only second causes sin.

Another example is found in the Genesis account of Joseph and his brothers. The latter, in their hatred of their younger brother, sold him into slavery in Egypt (37:12-36). This was a premeditated sinful act on the part of the brothers. Yet in Genesis 45:8, Joseph states, “*It was not you who sent me here [Egypt], but God.*” We later read, “*You [the brothers] meant it for evil against me, but God meant it for good*” (50:20). Almighty God had a plan, and He accomplished it through the sinful works of men. He had sent Joseph ahead to Egypt so that His people would have someone to help them during the time of famine. The God of Israel was involved in a real way in the actions of the brothers, but He remained sinless throughout the whole account.

Various unbiblical attempts have been made to deal with the issue of the existence of evil:

- 1) Finitism: This view rejects the omnipotence or sovereignty of God. The God of the Bible is reduced to little more than a finite being, who is doing the best that He can. But after all, there are other (evil) forces in the world which are equal to the power of God. Satan

and the Triune Deity are caught up in a cosmic struggle. Hopefully, God will win.

- 2) Fatalism: The future of all things has been predetermined by God (or some supernatural force) in such a manner, that man has no responsibility. Freedom of choice is illusory. In this theory, man can hardly be held accountable. This is fatalism or Hyper-Calvinism.

- 3) Denial of evil: This view rejects the reality of evil, which renders the need to account for it unnecessary. Evil is illusory; it doesn't exist. Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the Christian Science cult, adopts this position. She wrote, "*Evil has no reality. It is neither person, place nor thing, but is simply a belief, an illusion of material sense.*"³⁴

As should be obvious to any Christian, none of these three has any biblical foundation. They are humanistic attempts to deal with the issue of evil's existence in the world, apart from the foreordained plan of God.

What is the nature of evil? Augustine taught that it is merely the privation of good. He wrote, "*For evil has no positive nature; but the loss of good has received the name evil.*"³⁵ That is, God is the Creator of everything good (Genesis 1:31). He did not create evil. Evil is merely the opposite of good, as darkness is the absence of light. (Note that Augustine is not denying that sin is a powerful force in the world, which would be practically to agree with Mary Baker Eddy. What he is asserting is that sin is not from the creative hand of God; it is the opposite of God's good.)

The Bible speaks in this way. As seen, God has decreed all things that will ever come to be. Nothing is outside of His sovereign purpose, including sin. But the decree with reference to sin is a permissive decree. That is, it is a decree that renders sin as an absolute certainty, but it is not brought about by a direct divine

act. As in the crucifixion of Christ, God foreordained it, but godless men freely and whole heartedly carried it out. God is the Author of free moral agents, who are the authors of sin. (Note: in John 8:44, Jesus calls Satan the author of sin.)

Further, the Calvinist view does not contend that the decree to permit sin, evil, etc., is a mere permissive decree; that is, that God permits His creatures to sin, as if He were to say “*Oh, that’s okay, after all, boys will be boys.*” God abhors sin. It is contrary to His nature. But in His perfect, secret will, He has seen fit to decree it to be a part of His plan for history.

Some nonbelievers, such as David Hume,³⁶ have argued that the existence of sin, pain, and evil in the world negates the truth claim of the Bible regarding God. Since sin, pain, and evil exist, Hume maintains that:

- 1) Either God is not powerful enough to eliminate it, in which case He is not omnipotent;
- 2) Or, He is either the cause of it or He is not benevolent enough to bring about its cessation; thus, He is not a good God.

But this argument fails to reckon with several biblical facts:

- 1) As a result of God’s decree, sin came about as an act of rebellion against Him, not as a direct act of the Deity (Genesis 3).
- 2) Not all pain, suffering, etc., is necessarily sinful. For example, parents sometimes need to punish their children, not out of evil intent, but to train them for their own good. God acts the same way with His children (cf. Hebrews 12:3-11).

- 3) God has told us that someday He will eliminate sin altogether. The second advent of Jesus Christ will usher in the day of judgment for some and the Kingdom of glory for others (Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; 2 Peter 3:3-13; Revelation 20:11-15; 21-22).

Interestingly, Augustine, in an *ad hominem* argument, maintained that the existence of evil in the world does not disprove the God of the Bible at all. Rather, it substantiates the fact that He is truly God. As seen, evil cannot exist apart from good; it is the privation of good. Therefore, the existence of evil necessitates the existence of good, which in turn necessitates a standard for good: God and His Word.³⁷

Christian man must never think that he can exhaustively comprehend the mind of God. “*No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*” (1 Corinthians 2:11) His secret will is not for us to know; we are responsible for the revealed will, as found in Scripture (Deuteronomy 29:29).

But even though we do not have exhaustive knowledge of how God is using evil in His world to accomplish His purposes, we know that His ways are perfect and we must trust Him to do that which is the very best at all times. Surely an infinite, holy, good, and all-wise God has a good purpose for all the evil, pain, suffering, etc., that exists.

Why then did God decree sin? The ultimate answer is “*for His own glory*” (Ephesians 1:11; Romans 11:33-36). But every reason why God chose this way of showing forth His glory, we do not know. Some things are hidden in the secret counsel of the Almighty. In the words of John Murray:

It is not ours to scan the reasons of His [God's] unrevealed counsel. It is ours to bow in humble adoration and say, 'shall not the Judge of all the earth

do right?’ And if we are disposed to say, ‘Why hast Thou made me thus?’, we should remind ourselves of the inspired reply, ‘who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto Him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?’. We cannot know the Almighty unto perfection.³⁸

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

Genesis 45:8: So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 29:29: The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Proverbs 25:2: It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.

Acts 2:22-24: Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

Acts 4:27-28: 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.

QUESTIONS:

1. Did God foreordain man to fall into sin?

2. Does this mean that God is the author of sin? Explain.

3. What is meant by secondary causes?

4. What are the three unbiblical views of evil presented in this chapter?

5. Does God use evil for His own purpose to accomplish His will? Explain.

Chapter Ten

Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism

In this book we have briefly looked at three theological systems: Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism. We have, of course, focused on the first of these: the one we believe to be the most biblical. Calvinistic or Reformed theology emphasizes the absolute sovereignty of God over every part of the universe, from the smallest to the greatest. We have particularly stressed this in the area of soteriology—the doctrine of salvation.

Our study has shown that the Bible teaches that fallen man is ethically (legally) totally depraved. This does not mean that man is not a free moral agent; it means that he has total inability when it comes to spiritual matters. Fallen man is dead in sin and incapable of doing anything which pleases God. He is not able to reach out to God. It is God who is the sole Author of salvation. He is the one who has elected, of His own sovereign will, those who will be saved.

Our study has also revealed that the Lord Jesus Christ died an atoning death for the elect of God. His sacrificial work merited salvation for the elect. Those whom the Father has chosen, and

for whom the Son has died, are drawn irresistibly to Christ by the Father. They are called into union with the Son. These are the ones regenerated by the Holy Spirit, so that they will respond to the call of the gospel. All three members of the Trinity always work in perfect harmony with one another.

Once an individual has come to Christ for his salvation, he will most certainly persevere until the end. He will never permanently fall away, because it is the power of God which will keep him unto his final glorification. The grace of God is efficacious *in toto*. Salvation is from the Lord from start to finish.

Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism both err in their attempts to deal with the biblical doctrine of soteriology. These two systems are diametrically opposed to one another. The former errs in one direction, and the latter in another.

Hyper-Calvinism, as the name indicates, is a perversion of Calvinism. It goes over or beyond (hyper) what Calvinism teaches. It stresses the sovereignty of God in election to the exclusion of man's responsibility. In its attempt to exalt the honor and glory of God, Hyper-Calvinism so emphasizes His election and irresistible grace, that it essentially eliminates the need to evangelize. The secret will of God is so accentuated, that the revealed will is de-emphasized. The result is a truncated view of Calvinism. Two things need to be mentioned. First, we must make clear is that election is not salvation! Election is unto Christ in whom is salvation. Therefore to believe that since God has elected a people and that they are saved by that electing act, wherein they will then be irresistibly drawn unto God is a perversion of biblical Calvinism. Secondly, we must also note that in recent history, some theologians have sought to credit Hyper-Calvinism as the manifestation of Supralapsarianism. That is to say that a supralapsarian view of the logical order of God's decrees necessitates a hyper-Calvinistic belief. This simply is not true! Historically, Supralapsarianism was the view of John Calvin and many other Calvinistic theologians.

Arminianism, on the other hand, accentuates man's ability in his fallen state, to the exclusion of God's sovereignty. In the Arminian schema, man is not totally depraved. He still has the capability to respond to the gospel call. Whereas the Calvinist teaches that regeneration precedes faith, the Arminian claims the opposite. Once man responds, in faith, to the call of the Spirit, then God will regenerate his heart. As seen, this is out of line with biblical revelation. Total inability means total inability (see Romans 8:7-8; and 1 Corinthians 2:14). It is important to note that the Bible teaches that saving faith is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8-9). Faith is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). But not all men have saving faith (II Thessalonians 3:2).

Arminianism comes in various shades and colors; that is, there are variant views within the system itself. But pure Arminianism contends that:

- 1) Man has not lost the ability to respond in faith to the gospel. He is not dead in sin.
- 2) Election is conditioned on man's response to the gospel call, and it is grounded in God's foresight or foreknowledge of how man will respond.
- 3) Christ's atonement is universal in import. That is, Christ died for each and every person who has ever lived.
- 4) The grace of God in the effectual call of the gospel is resistible. Man's will is elevated above the power of God's will.
- 5) Regenerate persons may fall from grace. Again, the power of man overshadows the ability of God to save.

Hopefully, it is obvious how far short Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism come from what the Bible teaches. Calvinism is the

only system which is true to the Word of God. Reformed theology claims that the Triune God of Scripture is sovereign in salvation from beginning to end. Yet, in accordance with the Bible, Calvinism maintains that man is a responsible, moral being. Neither of these doctrines is to be elevated to the exclusion of the other. They are both biblical truths.

We close this chapter with a brief look at the history of Calvinism. The system of doctrine which bears the name of John Calvin was in no way originated by him. As stated earlier, Calvinism is merely a nickname by which Reformed theologians refer to the dogma taught throughout Holy Scripture. Historically, the Christian church has been predominantly Calvinistic.

Calvinists avow that the chief theologian of the first century church was the apostle Paul. We believe that this book has fully documented the fact that the apostolic doctrine was that of Reformed theology. The second and third century church did not produce a systematic theology treatise, *per se*, but the writings of the Patristic period reveal strong leanings toward Calvinism. The doctrines of these early years were further developed during the time of Saint Augustine (A.D. 354-430), one of the greatest theological and philosophical minds that God has ever so seen fit to give to His church. Augustine was so strongly Calvinistic, that John Calvin referred to himself as an Augustinian theologian.

Augustine's theology was dominate in the church for a millennium. During this period of the middle ages (400-1500 A.D.), a number of Calvinists (e.g., John Wycliffe and John Hus) graced the theological scene. Even though many do not realize it, Thomas Aquinas was Calvinistic in various points of his theology. For example, Thomas was a predestinarian.

With the coming of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the church entered into the Reformation period. There is no question that men such as Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, Heinrich Bullinger, Martin Bucer, John Calvin, Theodore Beza,

John Knox, Francis Turretin, and a host of others, all held to the basic doctrines outlined in this book.

The English Puritans were strongly Calvinistic. Men such as Thomas Cartwright, Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, John Bunyan, John Milton, Thomas Manton, John Flavel, Richard Sibbes, John Howe, and others, adopted this theological system. Arminianism among Protestantism was in the minority.

The great Reformed creeds were formulated during this time. The Scots Confession (1560), Belgic Confession (1561), Heidelberg Catechism (1563), Second Helvetic Confession (1566), Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England (1562, 1571), Canons of the Synod of Dort (1619), Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), Savoy Declaration (1658), the Formula Consensus Helveticus (1675), and the London (Baptist) Confession of Faith (1689), are all Calvinistic creeds.

The eighteenth century saw Calvinists such as John Gill, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards used mightily by God. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought other Calvinists to the fore. Charles Spurgeon, Charles Hodge, William Carey, Archibald Alexander, Abraham Kuyper, R.L. Dabney, James P. Boice, James Henry Thornwell, A. A. Hodge, B.B. Warfield, J. Gresham Machen, Gordon H. Clark, A. W. Pink, and a host of others from the major denominations, held to the doctrines of Reformed theology. Charles Spurgeon once wrote:

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. By this truth I make a pilgrimage into [the] past, and as I go, I see father after father, confessor after confessor, martyr after martyr, standing up to shake hands with me... Taking these things to be

the standard of my faith, I see the land of the ancients peopled with my brethren; I behold multitudes who confess the same as I do, and acknowledge that this is the religion of God's own church.³⁹

QUESTIONS:

1. What is Hyper-Calvinism?

2. In what way is Hyper-Calvinism like Arminianism?

3. Define the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism by comparing the five (5) basic points which are: (1) Total Depravity, (2) Election, (3) Atonement, (4) Calling, and (5) Eternal Salvation.

Appendix A

A Display of Arminianism

A Display of Arminianism*

John Owen

The soul of man, by reason of the corruption of nature, is not only darkened with a mist of ignorance, whereby he is disabled for the comprehending of divine truth, but is also armed with prejudice and opposition against some parts thereof, which are either most above or most contrary to some false principles which he hath framed unto himself. As a desire of self-sufficiency was the first cause of this infirmity, so a conceit thereof is that wherewith he still languisheth; nothing doth he more contend for than an independency of any supreme power, which might either help, hinder, or control him in his actions. This is that bitter root from whence have sprung all those heresies and wretched contentions which have troubled the church, concerning the power of man in working his own happiness, and his exemption from the overruling providence of Almighty God. All which wrangling disputes of carnal reason against the Word of God come at last to this head, Whether the first and chiefest part, in disposing of things in this world, ought to be ascribed to God or man? Men for the most part have vindicated this preeminence unto themselves, by exclamations that so it must be, or else that God is unjust, and his ways unequal. Never did any men, more eagerly endeavor the erecting of this Babel than the Arminians, the modern blinded patrons of human

self-sufficiency; all whose innovations in the received doctrine of the reformed churches aim and tend to one of these two ends:

FIRST, To exempt themselves from God's jurisdiction—to free themselves from the supreme dominion of His all-ruling providence; not to live and move in Him, but to have an absolute independent power in all their actions, so that the event of all things wherein they have any interest might have a considerable relation to nothing but chance, contingency and their own wills—a most nefarious, sacrilegious attempt! To this end,

First, They deny the eternity and unchangeableness of God's decrees; for these being established, they fear they should be kept within bounds from doing any thing but what His counsel hath determined should be done. If the purposes of the Strength of Israel be eternal and immutable, their idol freewill must be limited, their independency prejudiced; wherefore they choose rather to affirm that His decrees are temporary and changeable, yea, that He doth really change them according to the several mutations He sees in us: which, how wild a conceit it is, how contrary to the pure nature of God, how destructive to his attributes...

Secondly, They question the prescience or foreknowledge of God; for if known unto God are all His works from the beginning, if He certainly foreknew all things that shall hereafter come to pass, it seems to cast an infallibility of event upon all their actions, which encroaches upon the large territory of their new goddess, contingency; nay, it would quite dethrone the queen of heaven, and induce a kind of necessity of our doing all, and nothing but what God foreknows. Now, that to deny this prescience is destructive to the very essence of the Deity, and plain atheism, shall be declared...

Thirdly, They depose the all-governing providence of this King of nations, denying its energetical, effectual power, in turning the hearts, ruling the thoughts, determining the wills, and disposing the actions of men, by granting nothing unto it but a general power and influence, to be limited and used according to the inclination

and will of every particular agent; so making Almighty God a desirer that many things were otherwise than they are, and an idle spectator of most things that are done in the world: the falseness of which assertions shall be proved...

Fourthly, They deny the irresistibility and uncontrollable power of God's will, affirming that often times He seriously willeth and intendeth what He cannot accomplish, and so is deceived of His aim; nay, whereas He desireth, and really intendeth, to save every man, it is wholly in their own power whether He shall save any one or no; otherwise their idol freewill should have but a poor deity, if God could, how and when He would, cross and resist him in His dominion. Corrupted nature is still ready, either nefariously, with Adam, to attempt to be like God, or to think foolishly that He is altogether like unto us, Ps. 1; one of which inconveniences all men run into, who have not learned to submit their frail wills to the almighty will of God, and captivate their understandings to the obedience of Faith...

SECONDLY, The second end at which the new doctrine of the Arminians aimeth is, to clear human nature from the heavy imputation of being sinful, corrupted, wise to do evil but unable to do good; and so to vindicate unto themselves a power and ability of doing all that good which God can justly require to be done by them in the state wherein they are, — of making themselves differ from others who will not make so good use of the endowments of their natures; that so the first and chiefest part in the work of their salvation may be ascribed unto themselves; — a proud Luciferian endeavor! To this end,

First, They deny that doctrine of predestination whereby God is affirmed to have chosen certain men before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and obtain everlasting life by the merit of Christ, to the praise of His glorious grace, — any such predestination which may be the fountain and cause of grace or glory, determining the persons, according to God's good pleasure,

on whom they shall be bestowed; for this doctrine would make the special grace of God to be the sole cause of all the good that is in the elect more than [in] the reprobates; would make faith the work and gift of God, with divers other things, which would show their idol to be nothing, of no value. Wherefore, what a corrupt heresy they have substituted into the place hereof...

Secondly, They deny original sin and its demerit; which being rightly understood, would easily demonstrate that, notwithstanding all the labor of the smith, the carpenter, and the painter, yet their idol is of its own nature but an unprofitable block; it will discover not only the impotency of doing good which is in our nature, but show also whence we have it...

Thirdly, If ye will charge our human nature with a repugnancy to the law of God, they will maintain that it was also in Adam when he was first created, and so comes from God himself...

Fourthly, They deny the efficacy of the merit of the death of Christ; — both that God intended by His death to redeem His church, or to acquire unto Himself a holy people; as also, that Christ by His death hath merited and procured for us grace, faith, or righteousness, and power to obey God, in fulfilling the condition of the new covenant. Nay this were plainly to set up an ark to break their Dagon's neck; for, "what praise," say they, "can be due to ourselves for believing, if the blood of Christ hath procured God to bestow faith upon us?"

Fifthly, If Christ will claim such a share in saving of His people, of them that believe in Him, they will grant some to have salvation quite without Him, that never so much as a report of a Savior; and, indeed, in nothing do they advance their idol nearer the throne of God than in this blasphemy.

Sixthly, having thus robbed God, Christ, and His grace, they adorn their idol freewill with many glorious properties no way due unto it...

Seventhly, They do not only claim to their new-made deity a saving power, but also affirm that he is very active and operative in the great work of saving our souls,—

First, in fitly preparing us for the grace of God, and so disposing of ourselves that it becomes due unto us...

Secondly, In the effectual working of our conversion together with it...And so at length, with much toil and labor, they have placed an altar for their idol in the holy temple, on the right hand of the altar of God, and on it offer sacrifice to their own net and drag; at least, — not all to God, nor all to freewill, but let the sacrifice of praise, for all good things, be divided between them.

Appendix B

CALVINISM IN AMERICA



CALVINISM IN AMERICA

Loraine Boettner*

When we come to study the influence of Calvinism as a political force in the history of the United States we come to one of the brightest pages of all Calvinistic history. Calvinism came to America in the Mayflower, and Bancroft, the greatest of American historians, pronounces the Pilgrim Fathers "*Calvinistic in their faith according to the straightest system.*" John Endicott, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony; John Winthrop, the second governor of that Colony; Thomas Hooker, the founder of Connecticut; John Davenport, the founder of the New Haven Colony; and Roger Williams, the founder of the Rhode Island Colony, were all Calvinists. William Penn was a disciple of the Huguenots. It is estimated that of the 3,000,000 Americans at the time of the American Revolution, 900,000 were of Scotch or Scotch-Irish origin, 600,000 were Puritan English, and 400,000 were German or Dutch Reformed. In addition to this the Episcopalians had a Calvinistic confession in their Thirty-nine Articles; and many French Huguenots also had come to this western world. Thus we see that about two-thirds of the colonial population had been trained in the school of Calvin. Never in the world's history had a nation been founded by such people as these. Furthermore these people came to America not primarily for commercial gain or advantage, but because of deep religious

convictions. It seems that the religious persecution in various European countries had been providentially used to select out the most progressive and enlightened people for the colonization of America. At any rate it is quite generally admitted that the English, Scotch, Germans, and Dutch have been the most masterful people of Europe. Let it be especially remembered that the Puritans, who formed the great bulk of the settlers in New England, brought with them a Calvinistic Protestantism, that they were truly devoted to the doctrines of the great Reformers, that they had an aversion for formalism and oppression whether in the Church or in the State, and that in New England Calvinism remained the ruling theology throughout the entire Colonial period.

With this background we shall not be surprised to find that the Presbyterians took a very prominent part in the American Revolution. Our own historian Bancroft says, "*The Revolution of 1776, so far as it was affected by religion, was a Presbyterian measure. It was the natural outgrowth of the principles which the Presbyterianism of the Old World planted in her sons, the English Puritans, the Scotch covenanters, the French Huguenots, the Dutch Calvinists, and the Presbyterians of Ulster.*" So intense, universal, and aggressive were the Presbyterians in their zeal for liberty that the war was spoken of in England as "*The Presbyterian Rebellion.*" An ardent colonial supporter of King George III wrote home: "*I fix all the blame for these extraordinary proceedings upon the Presbyterians. They have been the chief and principal instruments in all these flaming measures. They always do and ever will act against government from that restless and turbulent anti-monarchical spirit which has always distinguished them everywhere.*" When the news of "*these extraordinary proceedings*" reached England, Prime Minister Horace Walpole said in Parliament, "*Cousin America has run off with a Presbyterian parson*" (*John Witherspoon, president of Princeton, signer of the Declaration of Independence.*)

History is eloquent in declaring that American democracy

was born of Christianity and that the Christianity was Calvinism. The great Revolutionary conflict with which resulted in the formation of the American nation, was carried out mainly by Calvinists, many of whom had been trained in the rigidly Presbyterian College at Princeton, and this nation is their gift to all liberty loving people.

J.R. Sizoo tells us: *“When Cornwallis was driving back to ultimate retreat and surrender at Yorktown, all of the colonels of the Colonial army but one were Presbyterian elders. More than one half of all the soldiers and officers of the American Army during the Revolution were Presbyterians.”*

The testimony of Emilion Castelar, the famous Spanish statesman, orator and scholar, is interesting and valuable. Castelar had been professor of Philosophy in the University of Madrid before he entered politics, and he was made president of the republic which was set up by the Liberals in 1873. As a Roman Catholic he hated Calvin and Calvinism. Says he: *“It was necessary for the republican movement that there should come a morality more austere than Luther’s, the morality of Calvin, and a Church more democratic than the German, the Church of Geneva. The Anglo-Saxon democracy has for its lineage a book of primitive society—the Bible. It is the product of a severe theology learned by the few Christian fugitives in the gloomy cities of Holland and Switzerland, where the morose shade of Calvin still wanders. . . and it remains serenely in its grandeur, forming the most dignified, most moral and most enlightened portion of the human race.”*

Says Motley: *“In England the seeds of liberty, wrapped up in Calvinism and hoarded through many trying years, were at last destined to float over land and sea, and to bear the largest harvests of temperate freedom for great commonwealths that were still unborn.”* *“The Calvinists founded the commonwealths of England, of Holland, and America.”* And again, *“To Calvinists more than to any other class of men, the political liberties of England, Holland and America are due.”*

The testimony of another famous historian, the Frenchman

Taine, who himself held no religious faith, is worthy of consideration. Concerning the Calvinists he said: *“These men are the true heroes of England. They founded England, in spite of the corruption of the Stuarts, by the exercise of duty, by the practice of justice, by obstinate toil, by vindication of right, by resistance to oppression, by the conquest of liberty, by the repression of vice. They founded Scotland; they founded the United States; at this day they are, by their descendants, founding Australia and colonizing the world.”*

In his book, *“The Creed of Presbyterians,”* E.W. Smith asks concerning the American colonists, *“Where learned they those immortal principles of the rights of man, of human liberty, equality and self-government, on which they based their Republic, and which form today the distinctive glory of our American civilization? In the school of Calvin they learned them. There the modern world learned them. So history teaches.”* (p. 121).

We shall now pass on to consider the influence which the Presbyterian Church as a Church exerted in the formation of the Republic. *“The Presbyterian Church,”* said Dr. W.H. Roberts in an address before the General Assembly, *“was for three quarters of a century the sole representative upon this continent of republican government as now organized in the nation.”* And then he continues: *“From 1706 to the opening of the revolutionary struggle the only body in existence which stood for our present national political organization was the General Synod of the American Presbyterian Church. It alone among ecclesiastical and political colonial organizations exercised authority, derived from the colonists themselves, over bodies of Americans scattered through all the colonies from New England to Georgia. The colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it is to be remembered, while all dependent upon Great Britain, were independent of each other. Such a body as the Continental Congress did not exist until 1774. The religious condition of the Country was similar to the political. The Congregational Churches of New England had no connection with each other, and had no power apart from the civil*

government. The Episcopal Church was without organization in the colonies, was dependent for support and a ministry on the Established Church of England, and was filled with an intense loyalty to the British monarchy. The Reformed Dutch Church did not become an efficient and independent organization until 1771, and the German Reformed Church did not attain to that condition until 1793. The Baptists Churches were separate organizations, the Methodists were practically unknown, and the Quakers were noncombatants.”

Delegates met every year in the General Synod, and as Dr. Roberts tells us, the Church became “*a bond of union and correspondence between large elements in the population of the divided colonies.*” “*Is it any wonder,*” he continues, “*that under its fostering influence the sentiments of true liberty, as well as the tenets of a sound gospel, were preached throughout the territory from Long Island to South Carolina, and that above all a feeling of unity between the Colonies began slowly but surely to assert itself? Too much emphasis cannot be laid, in connection with the origin of the nation, upon the influence of that ecclesiastical republic, which from 1706 to 1774 was the only representative on this continent of fully developed federal republican institutions. The United States of America owes much to that oldest of American Republics, the Presbyterian Church.*”

It is, of course, not claimed that the Presbyterian Church was the only source from which sprang the principles upon which this republic is founded, but it is claimed that the principles found in the Westminster Standards were the chief basis for the republic, and that “*The Presbyterian Church taught, practiced, and maintained in fullness, first in this land that form of government in accordance with the republic has been organized.*” (Roberts).

The opening of the Revolutionary struggle found the Presbyterian ministers and churches lined up solidly on the side of the colonists, and Bancroft accredits them with having made the first bold move toward independence.

The synod which assembled in Philadelphia in 1775

was the first religious body to declare openly and publicly for a separation from England. It urged the people under its jurisdiction to leave nothing undone that would promote the end in view, and called upon them to pray for the Congress which was then in session.

The Episcopalian Church was then still united with the Church of England, and it opposed the revolution. A considerable number of individuals within that Church, however, labored earnestly for independence and gave of their wealth and influence to secure it. It is to be remembered also that the Commander-in-Chief of the American armies, *“the father of our country,”* was a member of her household. Washington himself attended, and ordered all of his men to attend the services of his chaplains, who were clergymen from various churches. He gave forty thousand dollars to establish a Presbyterian College in his native state, which took his name in honor of the gift and became Washington College.

N.S. McFetridge has thrown light upon another major development of the Revolutionary period. For the sake of accuracy and completeness we shall take the privilege of quoting him rather extensively. *“Another important factor in the independent movement,”* says he, *“was what is known as the ‘Mecklenburg Declaration,’* proclaimed by the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians of North Carolina, May 20, 1775, more than a year before the Declaration (of Independence) of Congress. It was the fresh, hearty greeting of the Scotch-Irish to their struggling brethren in the North, and their bold challenge to the power of England. They had been keenly watching the progress of the contest between the colonies and the Crown, and when they heard of the address presented by the Congress to the King, declaring the colonies in actual rebellion, they deemed it time for patriots to speak. Accordingly, they called a representative body together in Charlotte, NC, which by unanimous resolution declared the people free and independent, and that all laws and commissions from the king were henceforth

null and void. In their Declaration were such resolutions as these: *'We do hereby dissolve the political bands which have connected us with the mother country, and hereby absolve ourselves from all allegiance to the British crown'...* *'We hereby declare ourselves a free and independent people; are, and of right ought to be, a sovereign and self governing association, under control of no power other than that of our God and the general government of Congress; to the maintenance of which we solemnly pledge to teach each other our mutual cooperation and our lives, our fortunes and our most sacred honor.'* That assembly was composed of twenty-seven staunch Calvinists, just one third of whom were ruling elders in the Presbyterian Church, including the president and secretary; and one was a Presbyterian clergyman. The man who drew up that famous and important document was the secretary, Ephraim Brevard, a ruling elder of the Presbyterian Church and a graduate of Princeton college. Bancroft says of it that it was, *'in effect, a declaration as well as a complete system of government.'* (U.S. Congress in Philadelphia, and was published in the **Cape Fear Mercury**, and was widely distributed throughout the land. Of course it was speedily transmitted to England, where it became the cause of intense excitement.

*The identity of sentiment and similarity of expression in this Declaration and the great Declaration written by Jefferson could not escape the eye of the historian; hence Tucker, in his **Life of Jefferson**, says: "Everyone must be persuaded that one of these papers must have been borrowed from the other." But it is certain that Brevard could not have 'borrowed' from Jefferson, for he wrote more than a year before Jefferson; hence Jefferson, according to his biographer, must have 'borrowed from Brevard. But it was a happy plagiarism, for which the world will freely forgive him. In correcting his first draft of the Declaration it can be seen, in at least a few places, that Jefferson has erased the original words and inserted those which are first found in the*

Mecklenberg Declaration. No one can doubt that Jefferson had Brevard's resolutions before him when he was writing his immortal Declaration.

This striking similarity between the principles set forth in the Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church and those set forth in the Constitution of the United States has caused much comment. "When the fathers of our Republic sat down to frame a system of representative and popular government," says Dr. E.W. Smith, "their task was not so difficult as some have imagined. They had a model to work by."

If the average American citizen were asked, who was the founder of America, the true author of our great Republic, he might be puzzled to answer. We can imagine his amazement at hearing the answer given to this question by the famous German historian, Ranke, one of the profoundest scholars of modern times. Says Ranke, 'John Calvin was the virtual founder of America.'

D'Aubigne, whose history of the Reformation is a classic, writes: "Calvin was the founder of the greatest of republics. The Pilgrims who left their country in the reign of James I, and landing on the barren soil of New England, founded populous and mighty colonies, were his sons, his direct and legitimate sons; and that American nation which we have seen growing so rapidly boasts as its father the humble Reformer on the shore of Lake Leman."

Dr. E.W. Smith says, "These revolutionary principles of republican liberty and self-government, taught and embodied in the system of Calvin, were brought to America, and in this new land where they have borne so mighty a harvest were planted, by whose hands? The hands of the Calvinists. The vital relation of Calvin and Calvinism to the founding of the free institutions of America, however strange in some ears the statement of Ranke may have sounded, is recognized

and affirmed by historians of all lands and creeds.”

All this has been thoroughly understood and candidly acknowledged by such penetrating and philosophic historians as Bancroft, who far though he was from being Calvinistic in his own personal convictions, simply calls Calvin “*the father of America,*” and adds: “*He who will not honor the memory and respect the influence of Calvin knows but little of the origin of American liberty.*”

When we remember that two-thirds of the population at the time of the Revolution had been trained in the school of Calvin, and when we remember how unitedly and enthusiastically the Calvinists labored for the cause of independence, we readily see how true are the above testimonies.

There were practically no Methodists in America at the time of the Revolution; and, in fact, the Methodist Church was not officially organized as such in England until the year 1784, which was three years after the American Revolution closed. John Wesley, great and good man though he was, was a Tory and a believer in political nonresistance. He wrote against the American “*rebellion,*” but accepted the providential result. McFetridge tells us:

The Methodists had hardly a foothold in the colonies when the war began. In 1773 they claimed about one hundred and sixty members. Their ministers were almost all, if not all, from England, and were staunch supporters of the Crown against American Independence. Hence, when the war was broke out they were compelled to fly from the country. Their political views were naturally in accord with those of their great leader, John Wesley, who wielded all the power of his eloquence and influence against the independence of the colonies. (Bancroft, Hist. U.S., Vol. VII, p. 261.) He did which his noble Church was to reap her largest harvests, and that in the Declaration which he so

earnestly opposed lay the security of the liberties of his followers.

In England and America the great struggles for civil and religious liberty were nursed in Calvinism, inspired by Calvinism, and carried out largely by men who were Calvinists. And because the majority of historians have never made a serious study of Calvinism they have never been able to give us a truthful and complete account of what it has done in these countries. Only the light of historical investigations is needed to show us how our forefathers believed in it and were controlled by it. We live in a day when the services of the Calvinists in the founding of this country have been largely forgotten, and one can hardly treat of this subject without appearing to be a mere eulogizer of Calvinism. We may well do honor to that Creed which has been borne such sweet fruits and to which America owes so much.

CALVINISM AND REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNEMENT

While religious and civil liberty have no organic connection, they nevertheless have a very strong affinity for each other; and where one is lacking the other will not long endure. History is eloquent in declaring that on a people's religion ever depends their freedom or their bondage. It is a matter of supreme importance what doctrines they believe, what principles they adopt: for these must serve as the basis upon which the superstructure of their lives and their government rests. Calvinism was revolutionary. It taught the natural equality of men, and its essential tendency was to destroy all distinctions of rank and all claims to superiority which rested upon wealth or vested privilege. The liberty-loving soul of the Calvinist has made him a crusader against those artificial distinctions which raise some men above others.

Politically, Calvinism has been the chief source of modern

republican government. Calvinism and republicanism are related to each other as cause and effect; and where a people are possessed of the former, the latter will soon be developed. Calvin himself held that the Church, under God was a spiritual republic; and certainly he was a republican in theory. James I was well aware of the effects of Calvinism when he said, "*Presbytery agreeth as well with the monarchy as God with the Devil.*" Bancroft speaks of "*the political character of Calvinism, which with one consent and with instinctive judgment the monarchs of that day feared as republicanism.*" Another American historian, John Fiske, has written, "*It would be hard to overrate the debt which mankind owes to Calvin. The spiritual father of Coligny, of William the Silent, and of Cromwell, must occupy a foremost rank among the champions of modern democracy.... The promulgation of this theology was one of the longest steps that mankind has ever taken toward personal freedom.*" Emilio Castelar, the leader of the Spanish Liberals, says that "*Anglo-Saxon democracy is the product of a severe theology, learned in the cities of Holland and Switzerland.*" Buckle, in the *History of Civilization* says, "*Calvinism is essentially democratic,*" (I, 669). And de Tocqueville, an able political writer, calls it "*A democratic and republican religion.*"

The system not only imbued its converts with the spirit of liberty, but it gave them practical training in the rights and duties as freemen. Each congregation was left to elect its own officers and to conduct its own affairs. Fiske pronounces it, "*one of the most effective schools that has ever existed for training men in local self-government.*" Spiritual freedom is the source and strength of all other freedom, and it need cause no surprise when we are told that the principles which governed them in ecclesiastical affairs gave shape to their political vies. Instinctively they preferred a representative government and stubbornly resisted all unjust rulers. After religious despotism is overthrown, civil despotism cannot long continue.

We may say that the spiritual republic which was founded

by Calvin rests upon four basic principles. These have been summed up by an eminent English statesman and jurist, Sir James Stephen, as follows:

These principles were, firstly that the will of the people was the one legitimate source of the power of the rulers; secondly, that the power was most properly delegated by the people, to their rulers, by means of elections, in which every adult man might exercise the right of suffrage; thirdly, that in ecclesiastical government, the clergy and laity were entitled to an equal and coordinate authority; and fourthly that between the Church and State, no alliance, or mutual dependence, or other definite relation, necessarily or properly existed.

The principle of the sovereignty of God when applied to the affairs of government proved to be very important. God as the supreme Ruler, was vested with sovereignty; and whatever sovereignty was found in man had been graciously granted to him. The scriptures were taken as the final authority, as containing eternal principles which were regulative for all ages and on all peoples. In the following words the Scriptures declared the State to be a divinely established institution: *“Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God; and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good work, but to the evil. And wouldst thou have no fear of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise for the same: for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is a minister of God an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God’s service attending continually upon*

this very thing. Render to all their dues; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor,” Romans 13:17.

No one type of government, however, whether democratic, republic, or monarchy, was thought to be divinely ordained for any certain age or people, although Calvinism showed a preference for the republican type. “*Whatever the system of government,*” says Meeter, “be it monarchy or democracy or any other form, in each case the ruler (or rulers) was to act as God’s representative, and to administer the affairs of government in accordance with God’s law. The fundamental principle supplied at the same time the very highest incentive for the preservation of law and order among its citizens. Subjects were for God’s sake to render obedience to the higher powers, whichever these might be. Hence Calvinism made for highly stabilized governments.

On the other hand this very principle of the sovereignty of God operated as a mighty defense of the liberties of the subject citizens against tyrannical rulers. Whenever sovereigns ignored the Will of God, trampled upon the rights of the governed and became tyrannical, it became the privilege and the duty of the subjects, in view of the higher responsibility of the supreme Sovereign, God, to refuse obedience and even, if necessary, to depose the tyrant, through the lesser authorities appointed by God for the defense of the rights of the governed.

The Calvinists ideas concerning governments and rulers have been ably expressed by J.C. Monsma in the following lucid paragraph:

Governments are instituted by God through the instrumentality of the people. No kaiser or president has any power inherent in himself; whatever power he possesses, whatever sovereignty he exercises, is power

and sovereignty derived from the great Source above. No might, but right, and right spraining from the eternal Fountain of justice. For the Calvinists it is extremely easy to respect the laws and ordinances of the government. If the government were nothing but a group of men, bound to carry out the wishes of a popular majority, his freedom-loving soul would rebel. But now, to his mind, and according to his fixed belief, back of the government stands God, and before Him he kneels in deepest reverence. Here also lies the fundamental reason for that profound and almost fanatical love of freedom, also the political freedom, which has always been a characteristic of the genuine Calvinist. The government is God's servant. That means that AS MEN all government official s stand on an equal footing with their subordinates; have no claim to superiority in any sense whatever. . . . For exactly the same reason the Calvinist gives preference to a republican form of government over any other type. In no other form of government does the sovereignty of God, the derivative character of government powers and the equality of men as men, find a clearer and more eloquent expression.

The theology of the Calvinist exalted one Sovereign and humbled all other sovereigns before His awful majesty. The divine right of kings and the infallible decrees of popes could not long endure amid a people who place sovereignty in God alone. But while this theology infinitely exalted God as the Almighty Ruler of heaven and earth and humbled all men before Him, it enhanced the dignity of the individual and taught him that all men as men were equal. The Calvinist feared God; and fearing God he feared nobody else. Knowing himself to have been chosen in the counsels of eternity and marked for the glories of heaven, he possessed something which dissipated the feeling of personal homage for men and which dulled the luster of all earthly grandeur. If a proud aristocracy traced its

lineage through generations of highborn ancestry, the Calvinists, with a loftier pride, invaded the invisible world, and from the enfranchisement, decreed from eternity by the King of kings. By a higher than any earthly lineage they were heaven's noblemen because God's sons and priests, joint heirs with Christ, kings and priests unto God, by a divine anointing and consecration. Put the truth of the sovereignty of God into a man's mind and heart, and you put iron in his blood. The Reformed Faith has rendered a most valuable service in teaching the individual his rights.

In striking contrast with these democratic and republican tendencies which are found to be inherent in the Reformed Faith we find that Arminianism has a very pronounced aristocratic tendency. In the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches the elder votes in Presbytery or Synod or General Assembly on full equality with his pastor; but in Arminian churches the power is largely in the hands of the clergy, and the laymen have very little real authority. Episcopacy stresses rule by the hierarchy. Arminianism and Roman Catholicism (which is practically Arminian) thrive under a monarchy, but there Calvinism finds its life cramped. On the other hand Romanism especially does not thrive in a republic, but there Calvinism finds itself most at home. An aristocratic form of church government tends toward monarchy in civil affairs, while a republican form of church government tends toward democracy in civil affairs. Says McFetridge, *“Arminianism is unfavorable to civil liberty, and Calvinism is unfavorable to despotism. The despotic rulers of former days were not slow to observe the correctness of these propositions, and, claiming the divine right of kings, feared Calvinism as republicanism itself.”* (*Used by permission from Dr. Boettner's Book *‘The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination.’*)

Appendix C
Justification By
Faith Alone

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE

Kenneth G. Talbot & W. Gary Crampton

American theologian Charles Hodge once wrote:

How can a man be just with God? The answer given to this question decides the character of our religion, and, if practically adopted, our future destiny. To give a wrong answer is to mistake the way to heaven. It is to err where error is fatal, because it cannot be corrected. If God requires one thing, and we present another, how can we be saved? If He has revealed a method in which He can be just and yet justify the sinner, and if we reject that method and insist upon pursuing a different way, how can we hope to be accepted? The answer, therefore, which is given to the above question, should be seriously pondered by all who assume the office of religious teachers and by all who rely upon their instruction.¹

¹ Hodge, Charles. *Justification by Faith Alone*, pg. 1

Dr. Hodge is correct. If we are going to safeguard the purity of the Gospel message, we must be careful to avoid any misrepresentation of the doctrine of justification, because this doctrine is central to the Christian faith and the existence of the church of Jesus Christ. This appendix attempts to deal with this subject.

The doctrine of justification by grace alone (*sola gratia*), through faith alone (*sola fide*), in Christ alone (*solus Christus*) was at the very heart of the Reformation. Martin Luther called it the article by which the church stands or falls. John Calvin referred to it as the hinge of the Reformation.² The Roman Catholic Church, at the Council of Trent (1546-1563), recognized this doctrine as the central issue between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. But whereas the Protestant church stood upon this doctrine as the major tenet of Christianity, Roman Catholicism fell away by rejecting it.

Basically, there are five prominent, different, and conflicting views regarding the doctrine of justification by faith alone: liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, antinomianism, Roman Catholicism, and biblical evangelicalism.³ The first view, liberalism, denies the need of faith in Jesus Christ for justification; whereas the remaining four views claim that a profession of faith in Christ as Savior is necessary. Liberalism is a works righteousness religion; whatever is necessary for salvation, it can be earned by one's own efforts. This view is clearly non-biblical in its teaching.

Second, is neo-orthodoxy, a theological movement that denounces both liberalism and biblical evangelicalism, and attempts to bridge the gap between the previously mentioned methods. It is a failed attempt. In neo-orthodox teaching, there is an alleged need for faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, but there is a great deal of ambiguity as to who Christ is. Is He truly God,

² Gerstner, John. *Jonathan Edwards: A Mini Theology*, pg. 69.

³ Gerstner, John, *Primitive Theology: The Collective Primers of John H. Gerstner*, pgs. 264-290.

the second Person of the Trinity, or is He merely man? In whom are we to put our trust? Since there is no definitive answer to this question in neo-orthodoxy, we are seemingly left with a logical paradox, both with regard to our faith and the object of our faith. Further, neo-orthodoxy teaches that saving faith is not necessarily followed by good works. A person may genuinely profess faith in Jesus Christ without his life being changed to the point where he is living his life in accordance with the Word of God. Neo-orthodoxy promotes a false gospel and therefore is not biblical Christianity.

Third is the doctrine of antinomianism, which is predominately found today in Dispensationalism (although it is not restricted to it), maintains that justification is by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. Antinomians also stress the “fiducial” nature of saving faith in Jesus Christ as He is revealed in Scripture. Some explanation is in order concerning the meaning of the “fiducial” nature of faith.

First, not all faith is justifying faith. The Bible speaks of several kinds of faith, only one of which is genuine, justifying faith. Historical faith is one kind of non-justifying faith. All that is involved here is an historical assent to the truth claims of the gospel. As taught in James 2:19, even the demons have this kind of faith: *“You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble!”* Scripture also speaks of a temporary faith, which is non-justifying. This kind of faith does not endure; it comes and it goes, and it leaves in times of persecution. We see this taught in Matthew 13:20-21: *“But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.”* Then there is miraculous faith, which believes in or even performs miracles as in 1 Corinthians 13:1-2: *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the*

gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” Paul tells us that even the Antichrist can perform such “lying wonders” (2 Thessalonians 2:9). This, too, is a non-justifying faith.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism states most clearly that: *“Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.”*⁴ Biblical faith accepts and believes the Word of God as the truth of God concerning His Son. It is this type of faith that unites the believer to Christ, based on His person and the work. We are told in John 7:38: *“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”* It is this kind faith by which a sinner is justified before God as taught by the Apostle Paul in Romans 3:22-26: *“even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”*

In justifying faith the believer appropriates and rests on Christ alone as Mediator in all his offices, based upon the divine testimony of God’s Word. Therefore, orthodox Christianity teaches that justifying faith involves three elements: knowledge (*notitia*), assent (*assensus*), and trust (*fiducia*). It is not enough to know the truth about Jesus Christ; nor is it sufficient merely to assent to the truth claims of the gospel (as in historical faith), as essential as these are. Saving faith is that which also whole-heartedly acquiesces to the Christ revealed in Scripture. Biblical conversion entails a

⁴The Westminster Shorter Catechism: Question 86.

whole-souled commitment. Justifying faith is a faith that makes a fiducial (i.e., a trusting) response to the gospel promises. As taught by our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 10:22, it is a faith that endures to the end: *“He who endures to the end will be saved.”* This faith puts no trust in signs and wonders (John 6:26-29). It is a faith that produces spiritual fruit, “some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, and some a hundred.” (Mark 4:20) In general, this is taught, and correctly so, by antinomians.

Where is the error in antinomianism? It is in the defective view of the necessity of good works. A denial of the necessity of good works in the process of sanctification following justification, is a denial of genuine saving faith, because “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26). This is not to say that antinomians are opposed to good works. In fact, many of them are zealous for good works. But when this school asserts that there can be justification by faith without “necessary” (as opposed to meritorious) good works, it invalidates the doctrine of justification by faith, for a non-working faith is not saving faith. Antinomianism, then, is another gospel.

Fourth, is Roman Catholicism. First, whereas in biblical Christianity, *“justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone,”*⁵ in Romanism, justification is infused into the believer who thereby becomes righteous.⁶ The believer, then, may lose his state of justification by falling away from the faith. This is a false view of justification. Second, in Romanism the individual is justified by faith, plus works.⁷ Meritorious good works are necessary to complete faith; the works are prior to justification, rather than following justification. Works become foundational for justification; they are not “necessary” good works that adorn a

⁵ The Westminster Shorter Catechism: Question 33.

⁶ Schaff, Philip, editor, *The Creeds of Christendom*, Volume II, pg. 112.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pgs. 112, 115.

living faith that demonstrates that the individual has “acceptance” by God, rather, they are meritorious good works that are needed for “acceptance” with God. Therefore, the believing sinner is able to achieve his own justification; he earns his salvation. This is a fatally erroneous teaching and another gospel altogether.

Fifth is evangelical Christianity, which teaches justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. It is this doctrine of justification that is admirably taught by the Westminster Confession of Faith as follows:

Those whom God effectually calls, He also freely justifies: not by infusing righteousness into them [as in Roman Catholicism], but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting them as righteous, not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.

Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love.⁸

It is clear that when the Westminster divines speak of justification by faith alone, they are not saying that faith is in any sense meritorious. Faith is that which unites one to Christ who alone saves. Faith means trusting in Christ who alone justifies.

⁸ The Westminster Confession of Faith: Chapter 11, Sections 1 and 2.

Justification is by God's grace (*sola gratia*), through faith alone (*sola fide*). The Westminster Confession clearly teaches that faith "is the alone instrument of justification," not the cause of it.

Further, justification is forensic; that is, it is a legal act or declaration by God. Justification is imputed, not infused. As Paul teaches in 2 Corinthians 5:21, it is an alien righteousness that justifies; it is Christ's righteousness: "*For He [God the Father] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him [Christ].*" The guilty sinner is "declared" righteous, in Christ, by God. We should also carefully consider what the Evangelical and Reformed position teaches, as noted in 2 Corinthians 5:21 and the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, that there is a double imputation which occurs in justification. Christ's righteousness is imputed to the elect, while at the same time their sins are imputed to Christ. It is not enough that the elect sinner is forgiven (and his sins taken away), he must also be declared righteous as the perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed to him. In the words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, in justification, not only does God "*pardon all our sins,*" but He also "*accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.*"⁹

Biblical Christianity also teaches that a genuine saving faith involves a fiducial response to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. As explained by the Westminster Larger Catechism:

Justifying faith is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and the Word of God, whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition, not only assents to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receives and

⁹ The Westminster Shorter Catechism: Question 33.

*rests upon Christ and His righteousness, therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of His person righteous in the sight of God for salvation.*¹⁰

Moreover, as taught by the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (cited above), biblical evangelicalism maintains that although justification is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, a justifying faith is “*not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love.*” That is, saving faith will produce good works: “*The root of the righteous yields fruit*” (Proverbs 12:12). Justifying faith is not faith plus works (as in Roman Catholicism), nor is it faith without works (as in antinomianism); it is a faith that works. The works, however, are not works of merit, but of necessity, because “*faith without works is dead*” (James 2:26).

Saving faith will “necessarily” produce good works, because, as explained by John Calvin, justification and sanctification are inseparable. Sanctification necessarily flows from justification:

*Christ saves no one whom He does not sanctify at the same time.... Thus it is clear how true it is that we are justified not without works yet not through works, since our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness... the Lord freely justifies His own in order that He may at the same time restore them to true righteousness by sanctification of His Spirit.*¹¹

And further stressing the necessity of good works, Calvin commented:

¹⁰ The Westminster Larger Catechism: Question: 72.

¹¹ Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III:16:1; III:3:19.

But although works tend in no way to the cause of justification, yet when the elect sons of God were justified freely by faith, at the same time their works are esteemed righteous by the same gratuitous liberality. Thus, it will still remain true, that faith without works justifies, although this needs prudence and a sound interpretation; for this proposition, that faith without works justifies is true and yet false, according to the different senses which it bears. The proposition that faith without works justifies by itself is false, because faith without works is void.¹²

We must distinguish between justification and sanctification, then, but we must never separate them. Justification is an act of God's free grace based on the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the elect sinner. It is a one-time act whereby God pardons elect sinners. Sanctification, on the other hand, is a process. It is an ongoing act of God's free grace. The Westminster Larger Catechism explains the difference as follows:

Although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ, in that God in justification imputes the righteousness of Christ; in sanctification His Spirit infuses grace, and enables to the exercise thereof; in the former, sin is pardoned; in the other, it is subdued: the one does equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation; the other is neither equal in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection.¹³

In the forensic act of justification, God pardons all the sins of the elect, equally freeing all believers from His wrath. In justification

¹² Calvin, John. *Commentaries*, on Ezekiel 18:14-17.

¹³ The Westminster Larger Catechism: Question 77.

all of God's people are declared righteous and adopted into His family. They can never again fall into the state of condemnation (i.e., they cannot lose their legal status before God, because Christ is the legal surety whereby they have been legally forgiven and received into the family of God). In the process of sanctification, on the other hand, the remnant of sin is subdued in the life of the believer. Although this process is never perfected in this life (i.e., it is completed only in the state of glory), the believer wholeheartedly seeks to reach that state of perfection by mortifying sin (putting sin to death) and walking in paths of righteousness for Christ's name sake.

END NOTES

- ¹ *Spurgeon's Autobiography*, Vol. I, pg. 172.
- ² *The Reformed Faith*, pg. 2.
- ³ *HyperCalvinism and the Call of the Gospel*, pg. 5.
- ⁴ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 3, Section 1.
- ⁵ *The London Confession of Faith*, Chapter 3, Section 1.
- ⁶ *The Reformed Faith*, pg. 4.
- ⁷ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*: Chapter 9, Section 3.
- ⁸ *The Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England*, Article 13.
- ⁹ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*: Chapter 3, Section 2.
- ¹⁰ *N.I.C. On The Epistle To The Romans*, pg. 317.
- ¹¹ *Foundations Of The Christian Faith*, pg. 514.
- ¹² *The Reformed Faith*, pg. 26.
- ¹³ *The Reformed Faith*, pg. 13.
- ¹⁴ Cited in J.O. Buswell, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, pg. 145.
- ¹⁵ *The Five Points of Calvinism*, pp. 39,40.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 39.
- ¹⁷ *The Reformed Faith*, pg 27.
- ¹⁸ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*: Chapter 10, Sections 1 and 2.
- ¹⁹ *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, pg. 165.
- ²⁰ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*: Chapter 17, Sections 13.
- ²¹ *Knowing God*, pg. 181.
- ²² *The Westminster Confession of Faith*: Chapter 12, Section 1.
- ²³ *Basic Theology*, pgs. 337-339.
- ²⁴ *PresentDay Evangelism*, pgs. 141-5.
- ²⁵ *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, pg. 176.
- ²⁶ *The Five Points of Calvinism*, pg. 56.
- ²⁷ *Johnathan Edwards: A MiniTheology*, by John Gerstner, pg. 69.
- ²⁸ *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, pg. 182.
- ²⁹ *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, pg. 174.
- ³⁰ *Manual Of Christian Doctrine*, pg. 111.
- ³¹ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*: Chapter 5, Section 1.
- ³² *A Predestination Primer*, pg. 26.
- ³³ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*: Chapter 3, Section 1; Chapter 5, section 4.
- ³⁴ *Miscellaneous Writings*, pg. 21.
- ³⁵ *City of God*, XI:9.

³⁶ *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Part 10.

³⁷ *City of God*, XII:3.

³⁸ *Collected Writings*, Vol. II, pg. 74.

³⁹ Cited in Steele and Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, pg. 8.

*John Owen, *A Display of Arminianism*. Edmonton, AB: Still Waters Revival Books, (1642) 1989, pgs. 1116.

