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The Dangers of Arminianism

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INTRODUCTION

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Having been reared in American Evangelicalism for the better part of our lives most of us have come to hold very benign views of Arminianism. To us Calvinism versus Arminianism debates have always been rather peripheral arguments not founded upon anything substantial, doctrinally (although it was at the heart of the Protestant Reformation). Many of us in fact were taught that we were a little bit of both, Calvinist and Arminian. We were a mixture that consisted of two parts of one and three parts of the other, or four parts of one and only one part of the other. Since we never were able to hold to a perfect five point Arminian theology, we said to ourselves, "I can't be an Arminian." We said, "Since I have never been able to hold a perfect five point Calvinistic platform, I can't be a Calvinist either. I must be a Calminian or I must be an Arvinist." The fact of the matter is we were wrong on both counts. We were Arminian all along. Arminianism has always been a rather broad, flexible, progressive system able to accommodate many positions. For it is no doctrinal position in particular they oppose only things not free and contingent. No doctrine is expressly denied by the Arminian only questioned and overthrown as a consequence of having come in conflict with their pet doctrine. But Calvinists by contrast do not have to throw out large chunks of the faith to somehow shoe-horn their teachings into the Scriptures. Their teachings have been immovable for years. The five points of the Puritan's are the same five points today and without being a holder of all five "insiders" for the last four hundred years would never have included you as one of their own. Today our twentieth century democratic pluralism has gotten us into a lot of trouble with the word of God. We have drifted into a lazy, man-pleasing Arminianism that has led us to embrace a different Gospel. Even though the Gospel we preach is true Arminianism (and even Pelagianism), it is not true. Read on to see if you don't agree.

I. ARMINIANISM FOSTERS THEOLOGICAL CONFUSION

"Spurgeon held that Arminianism does not merely affect a few doctrines which can be separated from the gospel, rather it involves the whole unity of Biblical revelation and it affects our view of the whole plan of redemption at almost every point. He regarded ignorance of the full content of the gospel as a major cause of Arminianism, and the errors of that system then prevent men from grasping the whole divine unity of Scriptural truths and from perceiving them in their true relationships and in their right order.

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Arminianism truncates Scripture and it militates against that wholeness of view which is necessary for the glory of God, the exaltation of Christ and the stability of the believer. Anything which thus inclines Christians to rest short of this fullness of vision is therefore a serious matter which needs to be opposed." (Ian Murray)

A. A FALSE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION

Arminianism teaches that it is not the salvation or condemnation of individual(s) which is predestined, but it is the plan and the events which would bring the plan to pass. Individual conformity to the conditions of the plan is left up to the individual himself. Individual men and women are therefore truly free.

But doesn't the Bible teach that God chooses who will believe in Christ? In John 6:37 Jesus says as much. Who then comes to Jesus? The ones that the Father has given Him! One may say, "That is true, but God has simply given to Christ the ones that He foreknew would come to Him anyway. He doesn't choose the ones who will be saved. Yet that argument is a denial of the clear thrust of Jesus teaching in the above verse. It amounts to Jesus saying, "All that will come to Me, will come to Me," a statement that doesn't say anything. What Jesus seems to be saying very clearly is that the reason a person comes to Him is because the Father has first chosen to give him to Jesus.

B. A FALSE TEACHING ON GOD'S DECREE

Flexible and Temporary

Arminians deny the eternity and unchangeability of God's decree. They choose rather to affirm that His decree is temporary and changeable. So even though they agree that; before the foundation of the world God elected all men to be saved, most refuse His offer. In their view God's decree is subject to human will and so is both flexible and changeable. They say, the only, absolute and unconditional, decree which God has made from eternity, concerning man's salvation, is His resolve that unbelievers shall perish. Their's is not a predestinating of all individuals and events, but the fixing of a principle.

But biblically speaking that is wrong. Romans 8:29 says, "For whom he foreknew (individually not enmasse), he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

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C. A FALSE TEACHING ON FOREKNOWLEDGE

Contingent on Human Initiative

So far as God had a purpose for the salvation of individuals, classic Arminianism has always said it was founded on His foresight of the use they would make of their common grace. Some, He foresaw, would believe and repent, and so elected them to justification. Others, He foresaw, would believe and repent, and would thus persevere to the end; and these He elected to salvation.

Non-existent

Yet Arminian (now Pelagian?) theology is changing. Many of their theologians now say that in one sense the future does not exist, therefore God cannot know with absolute certainty the free moral choices of moral agents. Absolute, exhaustive foreknowledge of the future is thus an intrinsic impossibility contrary to the traditional view once held that God had foresight concerning future events. Only in so far as future events are now certain, can they be said to be exhaustively foreknown by God.

Independent of Divine Prerogative

For the Arminian the salvation of individuals depends, not on the decree of God, but on the free-will of the creature? "This is to make the creature have no dependence on the Creator, and to fetter divine Providence. What else is this but to overthrow all those graces of Faith, Hope, etc., to cast off all vital godliness; and to pull the great Jehovah Himself off of His throne of glory, setting up dame Fortune to be worshipped in His stead?" (Christopher Ness)

D. A FALSE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

Based on Foreknowledge

The Arminian contends that God elects individuals to eternal salvation based on His foreknowledge of their acceptance of the Gospel. He foresaw that some would not only believe and repent, but also persevere to the end; and these He elected to salvation. But believers are ultimately dependent on a gracious working that is deeper and more powerful than human resolve or response could, or should, hope to be.

A Generality not an Individuality

The Arminian's conception of election seems to be absolute and unconditional only in its resolve that unbelievers shall perish. God therefore unconditionally elects races and

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nations but not individuals. God does, indeed, (as they explain Rom. 9-11) providentially and sovereignly elect races to the enjoyment of certain privileges; but this is not an election to salvation; for free-will may in any or each man of the race, abuse the privileges, and be lost. Jesus' own ministry, indeed his very presence as bearer of good news, is not due to a natural historical process, perceptive human strategizing, or efficacious human belief. It is a function of God's own choice in loving and sending his unique and elect Son.



E. A FALSE DOCTRINE OF CALLING

Dependent on Free-will

The Arminian says, if it were true that free choices were not considered humans would have no say in their own salvation. Accordingly those not choosing to love, worship, and serve Him would offer no obstacle to His plans whatsoever. God would simply overcome them with His irresistible power and bring them screaming and kicking into his kingdom against their will. But this is not the God we Arminians serve. God is love. True love never forces itself on anyone. Irresistible force applied to free creatures would be a violation of both divine charity and human dignity.

Subject to Sinners

Arminians deny the irresistible and uncontrollable power of God's call affirming that oftentimes He seriously wills and intends what He cannot accomplish, and so is deceived of His aim. Even though He desired, and really intended to save every man, it is wholly in their own power whether He shall save anyone.

Yet with scarcely an exception the New Testament means by the words "call," "called," "calling" nothing less than the call which is efficacious unto salvation. It cannot be resisted.

It is true men are not forced against their will to come to Christ; yet that is only because new desires have come with the new creature which has brought with it a change of will. They come because they want to come. In the same way other men turn away from God because they want to turn away. No non-Christian complains that the devil is forcing him to turn away from God against his will. His will being so much a part of who he is, it never occurs to him to think that it might actually be under the devil's control. He turns away because He wants to turn away. But again, the same is true regarding the new creation.

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F. A FALSE DOCTRINE OF REGENERATION

Self-Initiated Regeneration

The objection of the Arminian to a passive view of regeneration may be summed up as follows. Sinners are commanded not only to put forth all the fruit of the renewed nature, such as believing, turning from sin, and loving God, but are commanded to perform the very act of giving their hearts to God.

"But God's precepts were not given to test our natural ability to will, but only to outline our duty. When our Creator has given to us capacities to know and love Him, and the thing which prevents it is our depraved will, this is no reason for Him to cease demanding that which is His due. If the fall is something men sink themselves down into by their own fault, this is no reason for Him to cease urging His natural rights on them, for if He did He would soon have no right left." (Dabney)

After explaining how God is not dependent on his creatures in any sense, Paul concludes, "So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." There are few clearer declarations of monergism (i.e., the idea that God alone saves) than this. In one sentence the apostle excludes any human activity, either volitional or physical. There is absolutely nothing our decisions or actions contribute to our own salvation. So much for the popular Arminian maxim, "God casts his vote for your soul, Satan casts his, but you must cast the deciding ballot." Gone is the decisional regeneration that makes the new birth dependent on an exercise of the human will: "You did not choose Me; I chose you and appointed you to bear fruit that would last," Jesus told his disciples (Jn.15:16).

Fruitless Regeneration

Arminianism has frequently separated conversion from sanctification allowing for a fruitless Christianity because it has lost the truth that regeneration is the cause of conversion. It has substituted in its place the false teaching that conversion is the cause of regeneration which results in no genuine conversion whatsoever. But once the true doctrine of regeneration is grasped we are made to understand that no man can be a true believer who does not possess new life 'created in righteousness and true holiness' (Eph. 4:24). While the new life imparted in regeneration is never the ground of our justification, nevertheless the Scripture knows nothing of the possibility of a justified man who has not experienced 'the washing of regeneration' (Titus 3:5).

G. A FALSE UNDERSTANDING OF THE ATONEMENT

Ineffective

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According to Arminianism the atonement has no special relation to any individual person and it renders the salvation of no one certain. For this reason the teaching has an inevitable tendency to underrate the meaning of propitiation and to obscure the fact that justification comes to sinners solely on account of Christ's work. Once such an ineffective view of the atonement is accepted in the Church, it is more than likely that the next generation will come to the ultimate obscurity of a man like F.W. Robertson of Brighton, of whom it was said, 'Robertson believed that Christ did something or other, which somehow or other, had some connection or other with salvation.'

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While the atonement for the Arminian is sufficient for all it is not efficient for all because not all fulfil the required condition of faith. The extent of the atonement is sufficient for all men, but efficient only for those who repent, believe and persevere. Yet in complete opposition to this view Reformed teaching has always maintained that for whom ever the atonement was designed all the requisite pre-conditions were purchased and secured by the atonement itself. It is not faith which makes the atonement efficacious for us, rather the atonement has secured the justification and righteousness of sinners and even the faith by which we apprehend these blessings is a gift of which Christ is the author and purchaser.

Conditional

"The Arminians prior to (the synod of) Dort wanted to modify the Reformed conception of the atonement by claiming that the cross did not actually save any particular person. The death of Christ, said the Remonstrants, satisfied the justice of God in such a way that it rendered all people savable without actually making anyone's salvation certain. It rendered God propitious toward everyone. As Platt, in his article 'Arminianism?' in James Hasting's Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, puts it, 'The Arminian held that the Atonement was universal. It was of infinite value, designed for all, accomplished for all. It made the salvation of no man actual, but rendered the salvation of all men possible, the result being in every case conditioned by faith.' Again, The supreme principle of Arminianism is conditionalism. We supply the condition that God needs before he can act." (David Wells)

But everything Christ obtained for us was not bestowed upon the fulfillment of a condition by us, but absolutely. There is no condition other than Christ's payment of the price by which He purchased remission of sins and eternal life for His people.

Moral Government Theory

Another Arminian theory of the atonement is the governmental provision to forgive sin based upon man meeting the necessary conditions (repentance and faith). God is not to

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be regarded merely as an offended party, but as the Moral Governor of the universe. He must, therefore, uphold the authority of His government in the interests of the general good. Consequently, the sufferings of Christ are to be regarded not as the exact equivalent of our punishment, but only what is necessary that the dignity of the government may be upheld and vindicated as effectively as it would have been if we had received the punishment we deserved. This view was invented as an alternative to the Calvinistic idea of Christ's dying as a penal substitute for the sinner. Since its saving power lies not in its being a price or punishment paid on the sinner's behalf, it is merely an example provided by God to induce faith and repentance by revealing how frightful sin is and what justice demands of it. The death itself is a mere demonstration of divine rectitude, which of itself saves no one.

This view regards God, the ruler of the world, as in a sense being able to relax the law that death follows sin and allow Christ to suffer as a penal example so that sin could be forgiven and yet the fundamental law of the universe be upheld.

Most Arminians have preferred this view because the efficacy of the death of Christ in the salvation of individuals depends entirely on their response. Hugo Grotius having gained the reputation of being its author not unexpectedly drew down upon himself much criticism from Calvinist John Owen for having devised it.

H. A FALSE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

Justification by Works

Arminianism, by making the love and salvation of God to turn upon the fulfillment of conditions on the part of the sinner instead of entirely upon grace, encourages an error which cannot be too strongly opposed. "Do you not see at once that this is legality," says Spurgeon, "that this is hanging our salvation upon our work, that this is making our eternal life to depend on something we do? Nay, the doctrine of justification itself, as preached by the Arminian, is nothing but the doctrine of salvation by works, after all; for he always thinks faith is a work of the creature, and a condition of his acceptance."

Partial Justification

Evangelical Arminians are disposed to doubt, if not to deny, the doctrine of imputed righteousness in so far as it relates to Christ's active obedience in fulfilling the precept of the divine law. While they may ascribe the remission of sins to the passive obedience or the sufferings and death of Christ, when they exclude the imputation of His active obedience a door is left open for the believer's own personal obedience to become the ground of his future hope after he has obtained the remission of past sins. This general

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outline was in fact an accurate representation of the sentiments of Arminians in England in the seventeenth century and has always been a point of weakness in their scheme of things. One contemporary subset of Arminian thinking says, "The holiness required of the Christian is not complete conformity to all the letter of the law which would require absolute knowledge, but complete conformity to the spirit of the law, which is love. This entails doing nothing from selfish motives and therefore, obedience up to the present light." But this not only down-plays the authority of the law over our lives, like Roman theology it makes the believer's own righteousness a partial ground of his justification resulting in nothing more than a religion of works.

I. A FALSE TEACHING ON GOD'S PROVIDENCE

A Deposed King

Arminians depose the all-governing providence of the King of nations, denying its effectual power in turning the hearts, ruling the thoughts, determining the wills, and disposing the actions of men. By granting it nothing but a general power and influence, to be limited and used according to the inclination and human will of God's "servants".

J. A FALSE DOCTRINE OF SOVEREIGNTY

Doctrine of Divine Inability

Arminianism has reduced theology to describing God's inability. Especially His inability to do anything which conflicts with man's sovereign will in salvation. The Arminian god is bound by our lips and by our words. Therefore doctrines of predestination, foreknowledge, providence, sovereignty, and election are relegated (or restated, or renounced) as they serve this end.

K. A FALSE DOCTRINE OF ASSURANCE

Too Simple

The Arminian devotion to free-will has resulted in a notion that saving faith is triggered by human initiative. In their system, saving faith begins with a human response, not with a work of God in the believer. Consequently people unsure of salvation are counseled to believe that initial responses are all that is necessary to assurance of salvation. But believing isn't easy, it isn't even hard, in human terms it is impossible. Saving faith is not something that can be defined simply in terms of rituals, decisions, prayers, raised hands, and altar calls. Saving faith is a life long work of God and a very revolutionary work it is. The Bible spends 66 books in the effort to describe it and define it. What are Arminians doing in thinking they can make simple what the Bible says is difficult?

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L. A FALSE DOCTRINE OF OMNISCIENCE

According to Arminians omniscience means that God's knowledge is limited (especially as far as the future is concerned). He does not know what cannot be known anymore than He can do what cannot be done (e.g. make a "square circle," make $2+2=5$, deny himself, etc.) C. S. Lewis declared, "Omnipotence means power to do all that is intrinsically possible, not to do the intrinsically impossible." Thus, to paraphrase Lewis, we might state that omniscience is the ability to know all that is intrinsically knowable, not to know that which is intrinsically unknowable. Because the future does not yet exist, absolute, exhaustive foreknowledge of the future is an intrinsic impossibility. Only in so far as future events are now certain, can they be said to be exhaustively foreknown by God.

Yet the fact of the matter is that all future events are certain by virtue of the doctrine of divine decree. Thus we see how false doctrines concerning the divine decree and predestination have invariably led to another false teaching the false understanding of omniscience.

M. A FALSE DOCTRINE OF IMPUTATION

To the Arminian the idea that the present condition of Christians is seen only through Christ's holiness, is a theological fiction. According to them God pardons only the believer's past sins on the basis of Christ's atoning work which treats him as though he had never sinned and brings him back to a place of imputed innocence similar to that found in the Garden of Eden although in actuality Adam's innocence was not imputed but actual. Nevertheless that is the Arminian view.

But the merit of Christ's mediatorial work is not partially, but entirely imputed; and is effectual for the complete justification of all who believe in His name. Christ is not divided nor is His righteousness capable of being separated into parts, so that one part should be imputed, while the other is not. Not only did Christ atone for past sins, but for present and future sins. Not only did He die an obedient atoning death but He lived an obedient atoning life.

N. A FALSE DOCTRINE OF DEPRAVITY

Only Partially Depraved

Arminians say, mankind is totally depraved, but God has extended His common grace to all so that every man or woman can search and find God. The Calvinistic doctrine of total depravity states that fallen human nature is morally incapable of responding to the gospel without being caused to do so by divine intervention (1 Cor. 2:12-15). Once the soul is sovereignly regenerated, it willingly responds in saving faith to God's command

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to repent and believe the gospel, but not before. To regenerate the heart is to regenerate and free the will also, a will previously enslaved to the fallen nature committed to the autonomist principles of the Fall and averse to God.

In assuming an autonomous will Arminians logically separate the will's actions from the causal elements and moral influences of the character, thereby setting God's sovereignty over against our responsibility. Paul, however, believed that it was God who was at work in the Philippian believers (Phil. 2:13). If we manage to will and then perform the good, it is only because God has first been at work in our souls giving life to the dead and regenerating a will that now desires to know God better and to follow his Good Shepherd. Ephesians 2:1-3 (NASB) speaks of the pre-regenerate sinner as being "dead in . . . trespasses and sins," starting out as an "object of wrath" who needs to be made alive by God. In verses eight to ten this is said to be "by grace ... for we are [God's] workmanship." This is not the language of synergism, let alone of syncretism.

II. ARMINIANISM IS SUBJECTIVE AND EXPERIENTIAL RATHER THAN OBJECTIVE AND DOCTRINAL

Pietism, a reaction against Reformation orthodoxy, represented a turn inward, from God to self. Instead of focusing on God and his saving work in Christ, it shifted the focus to me and my personal relationship with Jesus. While no cardinal evangelical truth was rejected the objective focus on Christ's justification of the sinner was subverted by the subjective focus on the experience of the believer. Once Arminianism arrived on the scene, followed by revivalism, this subjective orientation was intensified and God was no longer the sovereign Redeemer who saved sinners by his own will and effort, but was now the one who waited for the sinner to act.

While Luther and Calvin emphasized the redemptive event that took place with Christ's death and resurrection later with the encroachment of Arminianism the emphasis shifted to the process of individual appropriation of the salvation given in Christ. The mystical and moral effect in the lives of believers became uppermost.

But the Good News is never something I do or experience. The Good News is always about the doing and dying of someone else--Jesus Christ. Because the righteousness contained in the Gospel is perfect, and the righteousness contained in me is always corrupted by sin, and God demands nothing short of perfection, it is impossible for us to obtain the least bit of our righteousness from obedience to God's commands. Scripture could not be clearer about this point.

Arminianism travels hand in hand with experientialism and anti-intellectualism because in downplaying objective theology it exalts the subjective experiences that God

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supposedly fosters in the hearts of men. A Presbyterian lawyer and Arminian, Charles Finney one day experienced "a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost" which "like a wave of electricity going through and through me...seemed to come in waves of liquid love." The next morning, he informed his first client of the day, "I have a retainer from the Lord Jesus Christ to plead his cause and I cannot plead yours."

A. ARMINIANISM IS ANTI-INTELLECTUAL

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A Truncated Theology

Arminianism tends to reduce theology to its lowest common denominator. Evangelical Arminians today only have to believe that God can work dramatically within the narrow fissure of internal experience; they have lost interest (or perhaps they can no longer sustain interest) in what the doctrines of creation, common grace, and providence once meant for Christian believers. Even essential doctrines that articulate Christ's death such as justification, redemption, propitiation, and reconciliation have taken a back seat in subjects for preaching to so-called practical issues. It is enough for most to simply know that Christ somehow died for people. The Word is primarily seen as an instrument for coaxing the individual into accepting the new birth. The new birth, especially if one judges by the testimonies of converts, is not so much the result of hearing with human ears, in human words, a declaration of things that happened in human history. In short, it is not so much the preaching of the Cross, but the preaching of an experience "my personal relationship with Jesus," the day when "Jesus came into my heart," that is central. Having abandoned the mind and rational thought, all that is left are emotions and psychology. And once the notions of rational thought and truth have gone, there are no reasons for people to come to faith other than the witness we give of our personal religious experiences, real as these might be. (David Wells)

A Decimated Witness

Evangelicalism today is predominately Arminian in its theology and therefore has a legacy of anti-intellectualism that has not only crippled its witness to the watching world, but has opened the church itself up to the most remarkable reaches of stupidity and incredulity.

A Devotion to Pluralism

"It is humble to say, 'I don't know, but I'll have to look into that.' But Evangelicals today say, 'I don't know and that's OK.' To them theological debates are stupid, mere arguments over semantics that have no substance. Imagine one saying of the highly sophisticated formulas that were used to put a man on the moon, "What a stupid set of formulas!", even

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after the success is captured on television. Circumventing thought processes, allows a person to claim moral superiority for having the grace, moderation and sophisticated detachment to stand above and outside the debate. Ignorant people always cry for balance whenever they do not want to take the time to think through their own position. One person's views are deemed as valid as another's, no matter how stupid, because all ideas, like all people, are created equal." Traditionalism has determined that truth be determined by vote not by careful thought. While in past ages, consulting wise elders and the books of the great thinkers was considered an act of humility, in our day it is considered elitist." (Michael Horton)

B. ARMINIANISM IS PRAGMATIC

Clever Evangelism

"Arminianism is pragmatism's ally. The theology that denies God's sovereign election and affirms that man must decide on his own to trust or reject Christ places on the evangelist the burden of using clever technique to sway a person's decision. The content of the message is thus subjugated to the issue of how it is packaged. A pragmatist is concerned primarily with whether a given practice is expedient, not necessarily with whether it is in harmony with Scripture. He starts with the question, "What does the unchurched want to hear?" and builds his strategy from there, rather than asking the question, "What does Scripture teach?" and following a biblical pattern." (John MacArthur)

Devaluation of Truth

'If you believe that everything turns upon the free-will of man' says Spurgeon, 'you will naturally have man as the principal figure in your landscape.' "This being the case there is inevitably the tendency to regard Divine truth only as a means to gain men, and whatever truth does not appear to us to be effective towards that end, or whatever truth seems an obstacle to the widest possible evangelism, is consequently liable to be laid aside. One Arminian in complaining of Calvinism's lack of sensitivity to these things said, "Through what is involved in a misconstrued election, a relaxed attitude - if not a deadening influence - has been left on many within the Christian church."

Yet if the general affect of the preaching of the doctrine of election is "deadness" why did God use the doctrine of election to encourage Paul in his evangelism of Corinth? Acts 18:10, "For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." Nor was the non-election of Isaiah's Jewish congregation even at issue in evangelism. God merely told him, "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but

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understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not," Isaiah 6:9. If there was a deadening influence in Israel at that time, it wasn't the doctrine of election that was at fault it was its lack of exercise among the people by God. Are we then to blame God? "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

Pitch-Man Approach

The goal of the Arminian evangelist is to make the offer of salvation as free and non-threatening and as easy as it can possibly be made. In that way he thinks he can force sinners into a corner. What have they got to lose? To reject Christ now is the ultimate act of stupidity. Yet when looked at from a more critical viewpoint, the Arminian pitch-man is neither genuine in his motives nor biblical in his outlook.

Keith Drury a confessed Arminian himself says quite candidly, "We Arminians tend to put too much emphasis on man and his decisions, and not enough on God and the gospel. Sometimes we are tempted to act as if God is helpless without us and our work. We lean toward pragmatism and are constantly looking for "what works best" as if methodology were more important than the message. Since we believe that all men can be saved, we tend to assume that if they aren't saved, we have not packaged the invitation (or the message) right. We especially love management, leadership, programs, marketing, and research data. We tend to focus more on the "potential convert" than on the eternal gospel. Arminianism easily leans toward a NIKE mentality-"Just do it." We are somewhat less inclined to pray in order to move God to "do it." And, as has always been true, Arminianism can be taken to the extreme of humanism." We have only the recent history of Protestant liberalism to remind us how quickly pietism and revivalism evolve into secularism, once they begin to view the audience, rather than the God who speaks from Heaven, as sovereign.

Promise of Fulfilled Wishes

Pragmatism believes that man exists for his own satisfaction. To accommodate that view, pragmatistic Arminianism has concocted a gospel message that sounds like a guarantee of fulfilled wishes rather than a call to repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation with God.

1. Choices for church attenders Since attenders want choices and alternatives-such as different styles of worship, small groups to address various life needs, programs for the kids, Arminians will give it to them.
2. Practical training for pastors Arminian educational programs designed to prepare men for ministry are increasingly being handled by local churches and parachurch ministries

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rather than by seminaries. The academic graduate-school model is being replaced by the trade-school approach with its emphasis on hands-on experience.

3. Popular spirituality What the people want is what they get. Yet whenever people clamor for the practical and prefer to speak about the horizontal dimension--relationships and success--they are saying that they love God less than they love themselves. They are more interested in using Him as a means to their own ends than in glorifying God and enjoying him forever.

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C. ARMINIANISM IS PERFECTIONISTIC

Perfectionism was first given standing in the Protestant churches through the teaching of John Wesley, an Arminian, although he himself never claimed perfection. To support his position he distinguished sharply between justification and sanctification alleging that they were obtained through separate acts of faith. New birth and holiness were distinct blessings which both become ours by the same means.

What is wrong with that view? "Though many believers are consciously and confessedly 'justified by His blood' (Rom. 5:9), they are unwittingly dishonouring that blood by striving (in their desires after holiness of life) to offer God 'entire consecration' or 'full surrender' (as they call it) in order to get sanctified. So much 'living sacrifice' do they present to God for so much sanctification. They have been beguiled into the attempt to lay self on some imaginary "altar" so that their sinful nature might be 'consumed by the fire of the Spirit.'" These perverters of the Gospel who, in effect, represent Christ as only aiding sinners to work out a righteousness of their own portray man-centered religion in its most subtle form. (A.W. Pink)

Today choosing to be a "carnal Christian," one who receives Christ as Saviour but not as Lord, is an open option and a latter-day fruit (a bitter fruit) of this two-package way of thinking. Not only do Arminians try to cooperate with God in their own justification but here we see them making the same attempt in regard to their sanctification.

D. ARMINIANISM APPEALS TO THE WORLDLY CHURCH

More Palatable than Calvinism

Keith Drury says, "Many have not become convinced the Bible really teaches the Arminian approach. Frankly, Arminianism is simply more palatable to a secular culture. It "fits in" to the mind-set of the people in their pews. Like it or not, the secular mind is naturally Arminian in its outlook. I've discovered this repeatedly myself by administering a theological questionnaire to secular students in an adult education program. These "unchurched Harrys" invariably register Arminian theologically. Face it,

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Arminianism is simply more logical. It makes sense to the person on the street. And today's church is scrambling to make sense to unbelievers. We want to sound sensible, logical, rational, enlightened, fair. Arminianism is so much more appealing to worldly people."

More Consumer Oriented than Calvinism

"Thus, many Calvinist churches customize worship services, communication styles, architecture, and music, to fit the worldly customers. But they also adapt their theology by quietly creeping away from the "right end" of the theological continuum and drifting over toward Arminianism. The truth of the matter is, they are embarrassed by Calvinistic theology. They have found it offensive to the "customers." The Arminian approach to theology is simply more "seeker sensitive."

More at Cross-Purposes with the Word of God than Calvinism

Drury's evaluation of most churches is correct. Yet the Bible says, "Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God." If the Calvinistic gospel is harder to swallow by the man on the street, it is likely it has aligned itself more carefully with Paul's gospel. "For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness."

E. ARMINIANISM EMPHASIZES MAN'S ACTIVITY

Human Works

Another reason Spurgeon opposed Arminianism so strongly was that he saw that the spirit of that system leads directly to legality. For while evangelical Arminians deny salvation by works, the tendency of the errors they hold is to elevate the importance of the sinner's activity and to direct emphasis primarily to the human will and endeavor. This is the logical outcome of a system which regards the human decision as the crucial factor in determining who is saved, and which represents faith as something which every man may call into exercise if he so chooses. A modern evangelist, for example, has written, 'We do not know Christ through the five physical senses, but we know Him through the sixth sense that God has given to every man - which is the ability to believe.' Yet if God has given this ability to all men then the turning point must depend on the human response, as clearly not all are saved. This consequence is accepted by Arminianism. In the words of a contemporary preacher of this view: "This love of God, that is immeasurable, unmistakable and unending, this love of God that reaches to whatever a man is, can be entirely rejected. God will not force Himself upon any man against his will . . . But if you really want it, you must believe - you must receive the love God, you must take it."

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Human Faith

The emphasis is intended to be upon 'you', and the impression is unavoidably given that it is only your faith which can save you- as though faith were the cause of salvation. But the reformers taught something entirely different. Martin Luther said: "If any man doth ascribe ought of salvation, even the very least to the free will of man, he knows nothing of grace and has not learned Jesus Christ aright." We hold that man is never so near grace as when he begins to feel he can do nothing at all. When he says, "I can pray, I can believe, I can do this, and I can do the other," signs of self-sufficiency and arrogance are fully evident.'

Human Decisionism

Arminianism preaches the new-birth but it preaches it as a consequence of or an accompaniment to the human decision; it represents man as being born again by repenting and believing, as though these spiritual acts are within the ability of the unconverted. The Scripture says that the natural man cannot receive spiritual things.

Human Law-Keeping

"Once again, pietism and Arminian revivalism, with their emphasis on man and his activity, have confused Law and Gospel. A typical evangelical, whether in pulpit or press, will often present the Law as if it's far easier than one finds in Scripture. We often hear, God didn't give these commands in order for them to rigidly obeyed, but as goals toward which we should aim. They're not there so that God can judge us, but so that we can live happier, healthier lives. In this way, the Law actually becomes Good News, or Gospel. If we follow, "Ten Steps to Victorious Living," or "God's Secret of Happiness," consisting of instructions on how we can have spiritual victory, we are turning the Law into Gospel. The Good News is not that God has made it easy to save ourselves with his help, but that he has saved us even though we have no righteousness in ourselves.

If the Law is reduced in its severity, the Gospel is often reduced in its liberating power, and the end result is a message that is neither clear on the Law or the Gospel, neither bad news nor good news, but so-so news!

But the Good News is never something I do or experience. The Good News is always about the doing and dying of someone else--Jesus Christ. Because the righteousness contained in the Gospel is perfect, and the righteousness contained in me is always corrupted by sin, and God demands nothing short of perfection, it is impossible for us to obtain the least bit of our righteousness from obedience to God's commands. Scripture could not be clearer about this point." (Michael Horton)

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Human Experiences

In Luther and Calvin all the emphasis fell on the redemptive event (Christ's death and resurrection). Later the emphasis shifted to the individual appropriation of the salvation given in Christ and to its mystical and moral effect in the lives of believers. But we cannot win the battle for the hearts and minds of men and women by presenting them with personal, subjective encounters with God.

F. ARMINIANISM DESTROYS FIRST-LOVE CHRISTIANITY

Arminianism like all false teaching has a deadening and depressing influence on true believers who have not yet had the opportunity to hear the refreshing truths of the doctrines of Calvinism. Not unlike the Ephesians in Revelation 2 believers caught in this condition quickly lose their first love because they are being taught to worship a compliant and needy god who although is devoted to human happiness is almost entirely dependent on his followers to accomplish that end. As a result he illicitly neither their love nor respect only their devotion to service. But without a vision of God who is different from and standing over against them, the true Arminian has no compelling reason to think thoughts that are other-worldly. In fact, there is no reason to think at all, let alone to think about what God is like. Love of God and love of the world are always in competition with each other, and we have to understand that to understand why the Arminian god always loses the competition for men's affections. He is too small and weak to sustain faith. The fundamental problem in the Arminian world today is that their god rests too inconsequentially upon the church. His truth is too distant, his grace is too ordinary, his judgment is too benign, his gospel is too easy, and his Christ is too common. Indeed he is not the God of the Bible at all.

CONCLUSION:

For the above reasons Arminianism is dangerous to the soul of man. Not only does it turn man from the truth, but it puts the soul at risk of hell fire, the worst kind of danger there is. The most virulent heresy known to man cannot do worse. Therefore I submit that Arminianism is itself a virulent heresy. Those who truly believe it are not Christians. My advice is to have nothing to do with this doctrine. Flee to the truths of the doctrines of grace (Calvinism) before it is too late.

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