

Covenantalism and Dispensationalism

Arminianism vs Calvinism

History

In order to understand Calvinism, more specifically TULIP, it is important for us to first understand how TULIP arose. It was in response to the followers of Arminius who rejected the historical doctrine of predestination and who began to teach the new doctrine of freedom of the human will.

The concept that human will is not tainted by the original fall is nothing new. In the early 5th century, Pelagian propounded a new doctrine which teaches that the human will is not in any way defiled by the original sin because he did not believe that Adam's sin had changed man's nature in any way. To Pelagian, a man sin not because of the sinful inherited nature, but because he chose to sin. He taught that man has this freedom of will to chose to sin or not sin. A Church council was convened to discuss this new doctrine in 431 AD. Pelagian's doctrine was condemned as unbiblical and officially denounced in Christendom.

But the concept took on a new twist after that – man's nature did really get corrupted but not totally. The new error was man's depravity is real but only partial, not total. There was enough good in man to chose not to sin and chose God, and from there God's grace took over to save the sinner who chose to believe in Him. By this, it means that sinners made the first move and God receives them. Saving grace took on a new meaning – it is God's response to man's choice of Him rather than God initiating salvation.

Contentions continued thereafter. During the Reformation, Calvin defended the original doctrine of total depravity of man in His writings, the Institutes. This doctrine is fundamental to Anthropology and Soteriology in Systematic Theology. What Presbyterians really mean by "Original Sin," "Total Depravity," and "Inability of Will" is well crystallized in the Westminster Confession of Faith:

WCF 9.3, "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.

So, Arminius and his followers were in essence, merely reviving a form of Pelagianism in thier teachings.

Pelagianism	Semi Pelagianism	Augustianism/ Calvinism
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Denied original sin.• Man's free will to choose good and evil spiritually Grace not needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• God provides salvation by Grace• Man's effort + Grace for salvation Man need no enabling to believe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• God provides Grace to the elect to enable him to choose salvation Man needs God's Grace to enable belief in Him.

Covenantalism and Dispensationalism

Arminianism's progression

- Teaching regarding salvation by Dutch Theologian Jacob Arminius (1560-1609).
- Arminius studied for four years in the University of Geneva under the tutelage of Theodore Beza, the successor of John Calvin. He was against the Calvinistic doctrines taught in Geneva.
- Shortly after Arminius passed away, his disciples formulated the five theses of the Remonstrance or the five points of Arminianism (1610)
- Although semi-Pelagianism and Arminianism were rejected by the Protestant Confessions of the 16th century, Arminianism was revived and promoted by the English evangelist John Wesley and his followers.
- Arminian doctrines became increasingly popular in American churches as a result.
- DL Moody was one of the most popular 19th century preaching who was essentially Arminian in his doctrine of salvation, although he believed that salvation cannot be lost.
- Billy Graham was also a popular teacher of Arminian theology in the 20th century.
- Today, Arminian concepts have led to the erroneous doctrine of Open Theism.

Calvinism

- The Protestant Reformed faith was always the full 5-points of salvation expressed in TULIP.
- The system known as "Calvinism" (or Reformed Theology) has its roots in the writings of St. Augustine in the 4th century. Augustine had affirmed similar beliefs in his works. These beliefs were then systematized and expanded in John Calvin's (1509-1564) writings later.
- In response to the debates between Arminians and Calvinists, a Council was convened in Dordt (1618-1619).
- Protestant representatives from Reformed churches of other countries were present to study, hear, and decide if the teachings of Arminius and his followers were Biblical.
- The conclusion was that Arminianism is unscriptural and was rejected.
- It was out of the Council of Dordt that the 5-points represented by the acronym TULIP was systematized.
- Hence, TULIP is not the invention of Calvin, but his works in the *Institutes of Christian Religion* was so clearly biblical that the Council adopted his writings to affirm the Christian beliefs in the doctrine of salvation.
- Ultimately, it must be remembered that what Augustine wrote and what Calvin systematized is in reality Biblical Theology from Scriptures. It is well said that Calvinism is essence Paulinism systematized.

Summary of Teachings

TULIP – Salvation is all God's work, not man's

1. **T**otal Depravity (or Total Inability)
2. **U**nconditional Election
3. **L**imited Atonement (or Particular Atonement)
4. **I**rrresistible Grace (or Infallible Grace)
5. **P**erseverance of the Saints (or Preservation of the saints)

Arminianism

1. Man is not totally corrupted by sin
2. Man has the ability to choose God
3. Christ died for all men potentially and universally
4. Man is capable of resisting God's call to salvation
5. A believer can become unsaved or lost again if he backslides from the faith

Covenantalism and Dispensationalism

Comparison of the Systems

The "Five Points" of Arminianism	The "Five Points" of Calvinism
<p>1. Man is not totally corrupted by sin - Free Will or Human Ability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man is not in a state of total spiritual inability affected by the fall • God gave all men the ability to choose between good or evil in spiritual matters • Man's will is not enslaved to his sinful nature • In this sense he has free will to co-operate with or resist God's offer of salvation • Hence, his free will to exercise faith in God results in salvation • Ie, "Faith is man's contribution to salvation" <p>D. L. Moody used to put it very simply: "The elect are the 'whosoever wills'; the non-elect are the 'whosoever wont's.'"</p> <p><u>Problems arising</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exalts man • Reduces the work of Grace 	<p>1. Total Depravity (or Total Inability)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man is totally depraved because of the fall. • This means he has no ability to choose between good or evil in spiritual matters. He will not choose God. (Rom 3:11) • Man's will is enslaved to his sinful nature and his heart is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer 17:9). • Hence, he cannot understand spiritual things nor will he choose God (this does not mean he cannot make moral choices) • Man will not co-operate with the Holy Spirit even when the call of salvation is offered (1Cor 2:14) • As a result, unless the Holy Spirit works in the heart of the totally depraved sinner, he will never come to believe in Jesus Christ and be saved (Rom 9:16) <p>Romans 3:11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.</p> <p>1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.</p> <p>Romans 8:5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.</p>

Covenantalism and Dispensationalism

The "Five Points" of Arminianism	The "Five Points" of Calvinism
<p>2. Man has the ability to choose God - Conditional Election</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God's choice of an individual for salvation is based upon His foreseeing that the person would choose Him. • i.e., election is condition upon man's response to God's call. In this sense, God's election is conditional. • The choice to put his faith in God is solely from the man's will • It is the sinner who chose God and not God who chose the sinner. This is the ultimate reason why he is saved. <p>D. L. Moody thought that election meant this: "God chose me for himself, but the devil chose me for himself. My choice is the tie-breaker."</p> <p>John 4:42 And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.</p> <p>Romans 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.</p> <p><u>Problems arising</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exalts man – man is sovereign • Reduces the work of Grace • Rejects God's Sovereignty 	<p>2. Unconditional Election</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God chose to elect a person is purely due to His Sovereign will. • It is not condition upon foreseen response of man. • In this sense, God's election is unconditional. • It is God choosing the sinner for salvation and not the sinner choosing God to be saved. <p>Hence, his free will to exercise</p> <p>WCF Ch 10:2 This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything 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.</p> <p>Romans 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.</p> <p>Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:</p> <p>Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.</p> <p>John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.</p> <p>Rom 9:11-15</p> <p>(11) (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)(12) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.(13) As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.(14) What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.(15) For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.</p>

Covenantalism and Dispensationalism

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<p>3. Christ died for all men potentially and universally - General Atonement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ died for all men • However, while Christ's death pays for all the sins of all people, He does not secure salvation for any. • Christ's atonement is effective only when man accepts it. <p>Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.</p> <p>1 John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.</p> <p>The death of Christ pays for all the sins of all people. But not one individual has his own account settled until he believes. If he never believes, then even though the price has been fully paid, his sins will not be forgiven. The death of Christ is like some benefactor paying the tuitions of all students in all schools everywhere. If that could be true, what should we be telling students? The good news chat their tuitions are paid. (Charles Ryrie, "The Extent of the Atonement", <i>Basic Theology</i>)</p> <p><u>Problems arising</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is unjust because He sends man to hell despite payment having been made. • If Christ paid for sin, then it must include the sin of rejecting Him. Hence, unbelieving man should not be sent to hell still based on general atonement. • Rejects God's sovereignty. 	<p>3. Limited Atonement (or Particular Redemption)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirms that atonement is universal in that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is sufficient for all ○ It is applicable to any in human race ○ It is offered to all. • Hence Christ's atonement is absolutely infinite in its value and potentiality • No sinner will go to hell because of the lack of a sufficient atonement. • God's offer is genuine and He does not turn away any who will come to Him. But none but the elect will come to Him. (Jn 6:37) • Christ's atonement is limited or particular in its intention, design, and ultimate results • Christ's atoning work is therefore 100% successful. <p>"Faith, then, as well in its beginning as in its completion, is God's gift; and let no one have any doubt whatever, unless he desires to resist the plainest sacred writings, that this gift is given to some, while to some it is not given. But why it is not given to all ought not to disturb the believer, who believes that from one all have gone into a condemnation, which undoubtedly is most righteous; so that even if none were delivered therefrom, there would be no just cause for finding fault with God." (Augustine, "Ch 16 – Why the Gift of Faith is Not Given to All", <i>Anti Pelagian Writings</i>)</p> <p>Rom 9:19-23 (19) Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?(20) Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?(21) Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?(22) What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:(23) And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,</p> <p>John 17:9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.</p> <p>Christ's death is sufficient for all, efficient for the elect (Augustine).</p> <p>We are believers because we have been elected (Calvin).</p>

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<p>4. Man is capable of resisting God's call to salvation -- The Holy Spirit Can be Effectually Resisted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Holy Spirit issues a Gospel call to all. • He tries to persuade sinner to come to salvation. • But man is free to successfully resist His call. • Man's free will hence can prevent the Holy Spirit to work successfully in him • God's grace can hence be resisted and frustrated by man • "God's grace is not invincible" <p>Matthew 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!</p> <p><u>Problems arising</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is an impotent God. • Exalts man's choice over God's Sovereignty. 	<p>4. Irresistible Grace or The Efficacious Call of the Spirit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 2 kinds of calls for salvation – outward and the inward call. • The outward call is the general call of the gospel to both elect and non-elect. • God calls His elect individually to Himself • The inward call is a special call by which the Holy Spirit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Convicts the elect's heart of sin. ○ Enables him to understand the gospel. ○ Enables him to believe in Christ ○ The gift of faith is imparted at this time • The outward call can be resisted, but none can effectively or finally resist the inward call for salvation (Jn 6:37, 44; Rom 8:14, 30). (Jeffrey Khoo, <i>Theology for Every Christian</i>) <p>WCF Ch 10:1 All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed 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.</p> <p>John 6:37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.</p> <p>John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.</p> <p>Romans 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.</p>

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<p>5. A believer can become unsaved or lost again if he backslides from the faith - Falling from Grace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arminians believe that they can lose their salvation. • However, there are differences among them regarding this. • For those who believe that one can lose his salvation, it could mean <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If you do not keep your faith ○ If you backslide ○ If you apostasise <p><u>Problems arising</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is an impotent God. <p>United Methodist Church answer to "Can we lose our salvation?" - "A short, but very incomplete answer, is that our Church teaches we can end up "losing" the salvation God has begun in us, and the consequence of this in the age to come is our eternal destruction in Hell. God freely grants us new birth and initiates us into the body of Christ in baptism. The profession of our faith and growth in holiness are necessary for God's saving grace to continue its work in us, and both of these are things we must do for our love to be genuine and not compelled. We thus remain free to resist God's grace, to revert to spiritual torpor, and possibly experience spiritual death and Hell as its consequence."</p> <p>Hebrews 10:26-31 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins...</p>	<p>5. Perseverance of the Saints (or Preservation of the Saints)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once saved, always saved. • The genuine believer will never lose his salvation. • The elect are preserved in faith by God and therefore they will persevere to the end. • Hence, they will never apostasise. • They are not kept by their own free will, but by the immutable decree of election because of God's free and unchanging love, the intercession of Jesus Christ, and the abiding Holy Spirit within them. <p><u>WCF Ch17</u>: I. They, whom God has accepted in His Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved. II. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which arises also the certainty and infallibility thereof.</p> <p>Phil 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.</p> <p>John 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.</p> <p>1Pet 1:5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.</p>
<p>REJECTED by the Synod of Dort</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Church of Holland rejected Arminius' followers' system in 1619. • The Synod of Dort after careful deliberation rejected the system as unscriptural. 	<p>REAFFIRMED by the Synod of Dort</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Synod of Dort reaffirmed these historic beliefs as Scriptural in 1619. • This doctrine of salvation was systematized into what is now known as the "five points of Calvinism".

Summary

- TULIP exalts God and abases man in salvation
- TULIP gives God all the glory in man's salvation
- TULIP acknowledges God's absolute Sovereignty
- TULIP promotes the highest view of God and humbles man