

THE ARMINIAN CONTROVERSY

In compliance with the host Pastor's request I am going to attempt to bring a paper on the subject of the Arminian Controversy, focusing principally on the years AD 1604 through 1619 and bringing this into Wesleyan, or Evangelical Arminianism, that developed out of the Wesleyan movement. I am at a great disadvantage. First of all, in that we have already heard a tremendously stirring message from brother Gene Breed, and secondly you have each overly indulged in the rich food which was provided, and a full stomach is conducive to a non-thinking brain. By calling I am a preacher and not a lecturer, so I am bound down to the notes of this lecture in order to convey the contents of the study in a reasonable period of time. Then there is the disadvantage of the amount of time required to treat a subject of this nature.

The Arminian Controversy, says Philip Schaff, in his 'Creeds of Christendom' Vol 1, page 509, is the most important which took place within the Reformed Church, and corresponds to the Pelagian and Jansenist controversies which occurred earlier in the Catholic Church. It involves the problem of ages, and this is a key statement, "it involves the problem of ages which again and again has baffled the ken of theologians and philosophers, and will do so until the end of time. The relationship between Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility." It started with the doctrine of Predestination and turned round five articles or, "knotty points" of Calvinism. Hence the term, "quen quarticular controversy." Calvinism, and this is a tremendous statement coming from Philip Schaff who is not known as being overly sympathetic with Calvinism, said, "Calvinism is consistent with logical, conservative orthodoxy, Arminianism with elastic, progressive, changing liberalism." As in the preceding generation, strict Lutheranism had triumphed over Melancthonianism which was the controversy surrounding Melancthon, the successor of Luther, who watered down Luther's Predestination and introduced a form of Pelagianism into the Lutheran Church, in the Formula of Concord, so Calvinism triumphed in the Synod of Dort, and excluded Arminianism.

But in both churches the spirit of the conquered party rose again from time to time within the ranks of orthodoxy to exert a moderating and liberalising influence, or to open new issues in the progressive march of theological science. So says Philip Schaff.

Since without Calvinism the Arminian controversy would never have arisen, and Arminius would not have come to such fame in history, I personally feel it is fitting at this point to give a definition of Calvinism. Although I shall sum up later the Canons of Dort which state the Calvinistic position of God's Sovereignty and Salvation. Calvinism is more than a doctrine of Soteriology that is limited to Salvation, with which the 'Five Points' are primarily concerned.

At this point I think it might be well to interject that it was not John Calvin who drew up the so called Five Points of Calvinism, but rather these grew out of the Arminian controversy, as a counter remonstrance to the Remonstrance of the Arminians against the Calvinistic position.

Calvinism then, must be taken as a whole, and not just in the Five Points that pertain to God's Sovereignty in Salvation. It is a whole world view, or panacea. The definition which I give of Calvinism is taken from Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield's, "Calvin as a theologian and Calvinism today, pages 22 through 24." Warfield says,

"The Calvinist is the man who has seen God, and having seen God in His glory is filled, on the one hand, with a sense of his own unworthiness to stand in God's sight as a creature, and much more as a sinner, and on the other with adoring wonder that nevertheless, this God is a God Who receives sinners. He who believes in God without reserve and is determined that God shall be God to him in all his thinking, feeling, willing, in the entire compass of his life's activities, intellectual, moral, spiritual, throughout all his individual religious social relations, is by the force of strictest logic which preside over the principles of the outworking of thought and life, by the very necessity of the case a Calvinist."

A Calvinist is the man who sees God behind all phenomena, and in all that occurs, recognizes the hand of God working out His will. One who makes the attitude of the soul to God in prayer a permanent one in all life's activities, and who casts himself upon the grace of God alone, excluding every trace of dependence on self from the whole works of his salvation.

A much fuller discussion and definition of the subject of Calvinism can be found in the now available book by Warfield, "Calvin and Augustine" together with volume 1, pages 273 following, of "The Encyclopedia of Christianity." It is only fair to say, in the light of the Arminian controversy over against Calvinism, that modern Arminianism on the whole is so far removed from James Arminius himself, that on the one side, it is little more than Socinianism and Pelagianism, and on the other, in Fundamental circles, a modified Wesleyanism. To a large extent it has deteriorated into a form of religious humanism, with no certain doctrinal content. At least John Wesley was a scholar, having written over eighty volumes. James Arminius was a theologian of the highest kind. As a Supralapsarian Calvinist I can afford to be kind to Arminius and to Wesley, and that I shall attempt to do, whilst disagreeing with them thoroughly in their theological conclusions.

Therefore, we further conclude that modern day Arminianism, whereas older Arminianism was more God-centred, is totally man, emotional, experimental entertainment centred, rather than Bible, God-centred. In order to open this up I will try to develop my thoughts on the subject under the following headings.

[1] A discussion of James Arminius. His life and personal controversy.

[2] The Remonstrants and their five points of remonstrance.

[3] The Synod of Dort and its articles or Canons.

[4] Wesleyan or Evangelical Arminianism as it has become the foundation of

modern Arminianism without the doctrinal content.

Let us look first of all at Arminius himself, his life and controversy. In the Dutch language the name of James Arminius was one of several forms of the name. James Arminius is the Latin rendering of the various Dutch forms of his name. Concerning first of all his early life, James Arminius as we shall refer to him, because he is more popularly known by this name rather than the Dutch variants of his name, was born in the south of Holland, in a small town which translated into English would be, "Old Water," in the year 1560. Forty-nine years later in 1609 he died from consumption, or Tuberculosis, a very painful death, and just one year prior to the calling of the Synod of Dort which was called by the general masters of the Free States of Holland to settle the issues that James Arminius and his followers had raised. However, Arminius himself had sought time and again to call a synod of this type for the settling of the issues, but was cut off in life before he saw the realisation of that desire, and which Synod later condemned him. As we look at the life of James Arminius, although arranged by Providence, it would be considered from a humanistic perspective, as quite tragic. He lost his father in his infancy. This made it necessary that he come under the guardianship of Theodore Emilius who had been converted from Roman Catholicism as a priest in the Roman church and was a very devout Christian. At the age of fifteen however he lost Emilius by death. Afterwards, resulting from the death of Emilius, Rudolph Snellius became his guardian and in 1575 the latter removed him from his town of birth, to Marburg.

However, at this time, there was tremendous conflict between the Free States of Holland and Spain. Upon his arrival at Marburg, being only fifteen years of age, he received the news that the Spaniards had sacked his native town and in this invasion his mother and all other known relatives had been massacred.

Let us turn from this to examine something of his education, because it is this strange move of Providence that begins to shape the educational life of James Arminius. After the news of the death of his mother he went to Rotterdam to live with Peter Boethius who was Pastor of the Reformed, or Calvinistic church there. At the age

of fifteen with Peter Boethius the second he was enrolled at the University of Leyden which had just been founded, and studied there for the next six years, proving himself to be a scholar of no mean reputation. In 1582, approximately at the age of 22, he was sent to Geneva, Switzerland, there to study in the great school of Reformed Theology under the tutorship of Theodore Beza who was the successor of John Calvin. Now his moving to Geneva came as a result of the city fathers in Leyden having recognized his potential, and therefore the necessity of them giving him full financial support, they assumed responsibility for his education, in Geneva. Under the teaching of Beza, Arminius became a confirmed Calvinist. In 1588 after leaving Geneva and studying for a while in Italy under a world famous philosopher and then studying elsewhere, he returned to Amsterdam, where he was ordained into the ministry. There he soon became distinguished as a preacher and theologian. A much fuller detailed account of his life can be found in McLintock and Strong, "Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature." They being under heavy Arminian, Wesleyan influence, I can assure you, give a favourable account of every detail of the life of James Arminius. But this leads us now out of his early life, through his education and to the development of his own personal controversy within Reformed circles.

Just how did he become opposed to the Calvinistic faith? What got him, who was by nature a non-controversial man, swept up into controversy that has carried with it his name for all these years? Again I quote from Philip Schaff, "The Creeds of Christendom," Vol 1, beginning at page 510. Schaff relates that Arminius was at first a strict Calvinist, but while engaged in investigation and defending the Calvinistic doctrines against Dirk Coornheart who lived from 1522 to 1591, at the request of the Magistrate of Amsterdam, he found the arguments of the opponent who was a Pelagian, stronger than his own conviction, and Arminius became a convert to the doctrine of Universal Grace and of the freedom of the Will. The great controversy however developed in a series of sermons which he preached to his own congregation from the Epistle to the Romans. Now you are going to find there is nothing new in our own time as we examine some of these views, and one of the finest ways of learning

Bible doctrine is to study Church history, with all of its controversies. I highly recommend this as a method of study. He saw in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans the description of a legalistic conflict of the awakened but unregenerate man while Augustine and the Reformers referred it to the regenerate man. Here was the beginning of the controversy. He denied the decree of Reprobation. His main objection being to the Supralapsarian view of Beza who had systematized more fully Calvin's teaching in that area. Arminius modified the doctrine of Original Sin though he never gave up the belief, and I am interjecting these thoughts, because Schaff does not bring this out, Arminius never did give up his belief in the total corruption of Man's nature by birth. Never! He held to it to the end. He only modified Original sin. Original sin holds us down and prevents our cooperating with God, but nevertheless he thought that Man was depraved throughout as strongly as any Calvinist here present.

He advocated a revision of the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism. These are the famous standards of the Reformed Church today. Ursinus was one of the authors of the Catechism and wrote its first commentary. I highly recommend it to your reading. Arminius came into conflict with his famous Supralapsarian colleague, Francis Gomar, Gomarus as he is sometimes called, who lived from 1563 to 1645, who is a very important person in the history of Calvinism. Hence, at that time, the strict Calvinists were called Gomarists. Francis Gomar who had conferred on Arminius his degree of Doctor of Divinity, now became his chief antagonist. The controversy soon spread over all Holland. Arminius applied to the Government to convoke a synod, appealing like the Donatists, to the very power which afterwards condemned him, but he died before it convened.

Now let me interject this to give a very interesting sidelight on the life of Arminius, that might help you place him in history. He died in the year 1609. This was the year, the same year, in which the Pilgrim Fathers from England arrived in Leyden, Holland, where Arminius was professor of Theology at the University, and where they lived until their departure for America in 1620. Arminius was born in the same year Melancthon, who watered down the Lutheran doctrine of Predestination

died, 1560. He was a learned and able divine and during the controversy which embittered his life, he showed a meek and Christian spirit. Condemned by others, said Grotius, a tremendous scholar, but one who favoured the Arminian position, he condemned none. His views on anthropology, that is the Biblical doctrine of Man, and his views of Soteriology, that is the doctrine of Salvation approached those of the Melancthonian school in the Lutheran Church. Now this is a very important statement. The tendency of his theology was, now this is Schaff speaking, toward a latitudinarian liberalism which later fully developed in his following. That is a key statement. Although Arminius would have denied it, this is what developed through his thoughts. As you know latitudinarianism later rose to ascendancy in the Church of England. It was that doctrine of no-doctrine. Give Man as wide a latitude as possible, and let us all just find a common ground of fellowship for Universalism. Now this is what Arminianism has become, without a doctrinal content. And so it denied all the major doctrines and led to liberalism as we have it existing today.

This now brings us to a consideration of the major parts, or points, of the controversy, for Arminius. The major factor in the Arminian controversy, affecting Arminius himself, revolved around a conditional or unconditional Predestination, and resistible or irresistible Grace. Drawing from William Cunningham, a great historian of the Church, a great Calvinist, as he relates in "Historical Theology Vol 2," will help us understand Arminius and his own position without the further perversions that were brought in by his followers who were known as the Remonstrants. Cunningham says that Arminius himself and the more evangelical of those who have generally been called after his name, professing to hold total depravity of Man by nature, have asserted the necessity of the special, supernatural agency of the Spirit to the production of regeneration and faith. Now we can agree with that, and Arminius's assertion that they are wholly dependent upon the Grace of God and the operation of the Spirit. Now this is what Arminius believed. This is why he would renounce Arminianism today and be ashamed that it is called by his name. He believed that if a man had faith it resulted from the work of the

Holy Spirit. I do not know any Arminian who believes that today! The hang-up was that he believed Man had power enough to resist the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. We will see that this is the whole crux of the matter. So while he professed to be anxious only to show that, as to the mode of the Spirit's operation, it is not irresistible, that was Arminius's main concern, nevertheless it was absolutely necessary for the Spirit to regenerate a man in salvation, as the Calvinist's contended. But he did not believe that it was an irresistible, or invincible work. Now we picked up the word irresistible from the Arminians, and adopted their language.

The discussions which have taken place upon this subject, Cunningham goes on to say, have made it manifest that there are other deviations from sound doctrine on the subject of the work of the Spirit in producing regeneration and faith, into which Arminians are naturally, if not necessarily led. The subject is inseparably connected with right views of the entire depravity of man, and of his inability in his natural state, to will or do anything spiritually good. These are subjects upon which I do not at present enter. Following Cunningham further, he says, Arminius, and this is very important, in his declaration addressed to the States of Holland in 1608, the year before his death, stated his views on the subject in this way:

"I ascribe to Grace the commencement, the continuance, and the consummation of all good. And to such an extent do I carry its influence, that a man, though already regenerate can neither conceive, will, nor do any good at all, nor resist any temptation without the preventing and exciting, this cooperating Grace of God."

Strike out the word 'cooperate' and you can accept that statement without qualification. We also believe that the regenerate cannot will to do good, apart from the Grace of God. The only difference? Arminius held that Man cooperates or refuses to cooperate. But let us continue with his statement.

"From this statement it will clearly appear that I am by no means injurious or unjust to Grace by attributing, as it is reported of me, too much to Man's free will. For the whole controversy reduces itself to the solution of this question." Is this Grace of God a certain irresistible force? That

is the controversy does not relate to those actions, or operations which must be ascribed to Grace. For I acknowledge and inculcate as many of these actions as any man ever did, but it relates solely to the mode of operation, whether it be irresistible or not? With respect to which I believe, according to the Scriptures, that many persons resist the Holy Spirit, and reject the Grace that is offered.”

That is the crux of Arminius’s statement. Arminius himself as compared with his successors seems to have held, in the main, not consistently, but in the main, Scriptural views of the depravity of human nature, and the necessity, because of Man’s depravity, of a supernatural work of Grace to effect their renovation and sanctification. This is the chief point in which Arminianism in its evangelical form differs from the more Pelagian representation of Christian doctrine and which are often classed under the same designation - Pelagianism. The difference is certainly not unimportant, and it ought to be admitted and recognized wherever it exists. But the history of this subject seems to show that whenever men abandon the principles of Calvinism, there is a powerful tendency leading them downwards into the depths of Pelagianism which is an absolute denial of the total depravity of man, and the atoning work of Christ, in its necessity to pay a sin-debt, as a substitutionary sacrifice. Arminius did not, so far as his views were ever fully developed, seem to have gone further in deviating from Scriptural truth than to deny the Calvinistic doctrines of Election, Particular Redemption, Efficacious and Irresistible Grace in conversion, and to doubt, if not deny, the Perseverance of the Saints.

These theological developments were to be found in his followers, particularly Episcopopus. They very soon introduced further corruption of Scriptural truth, especially in regard to Original Sin, the work of the Spirit and Justification, and made near approaches on these and kindred subjects to Pelagian or Socinian views. A large proportion of those theologians who have been willing to call themselves Arminians have manifested a similar leaning, amounting to a similar result.

Now we secondly, come to a consideration of the followers of Arminius, those who corrupted his doctrine and brought us to the pitiable state where we now are in Christian circles.

The consideration which we must take under view is that of the Remonstrants and their Five Points of Remonstrance. A remonstrance is an opposition, or an opposing view, disagreement. Therefore, we first of all, have the Five Points of Arminianism, out of which the Five Points of Calvinism developed at the Synod of Dort. Now the Remonstrants were the followers of Arminius and carried his corruption of the Gospel of Grace to further extremes. Some of the leaders were Episcopopus, who succeeded Arminius in the chair of Theology at Leyden, Grotius and Barnefeldt. In 1610, according to P.A.S. Declerk, in Confessions and Creeds, in The Encyclopedia of Christianity Vol 3, the Arminians under the leadership of Johannes Uytenbogaert held a secret meeting at which a Remonstrance was formulated. The Remonstrance dealt with these five Points of doctrine:

- [1] The conditional decree of Election
- [2] The Universal Merits of Christ
- [3] The Free-Will of Man
- [4] The Resistibility of Divine Grace
- [5] The possibility of Falling Away from Grace.

Returning to Cunningham’s Historical Theology and his statement with reference to the Remonstrants, he said that it is quite common among the writers of the 17th century, to distinguish between the original Remonstrants such as Arminius and those that adhered to his views, and who differed from the doctrines of the Reformed Church only in the five articles of the five points, as they are commonly called, and those who deviated much farther from Scriptural truth. The latter class they were accustomed to call Pelagianising or Socinianising Remonstrants. Now the Remonstrants laid before the States of Holland in 1610 their opposition to the Reformed Faith, as it related to Predestination, the extent of the Atonement, the nature of Faith, the Irresistibility of Grace and the Perseverance of the saints. It was firstly, negative in which were rejected the five Calvinistic propositions, and then positive in which were asserted the five Arminian propositions. Now this is important in the study because now a

system is being formulated around which the Synod of Dort is to meet and settle the issues as far as the Church was concerned, but to bring the issues into divisive openness as far as history is concerned.

It will be profitable to look at what the Remonstrants rejected so that we might better understand their five positive articles that were presented for adoption to the States of Holland resulting in the beautiful articles of the Synod of Dort. If you do not have a copy you must make sure that you obtain one. The Remonstrants rejected these five following points of faith of Calvinism.

[1] That God has before the Fall and even before the creation of Man, by an unchangeable decree, foreordained some to eternal life and others to eternal damnation, without any regard to righteousness or sin, obedience or disobedience, simply because it so pleased Him in order to show the glory of His righteousness to the one class, and His mercy to the other.

[2] God in view of the Fall and just condemnation of our first parents and their posterity, ordained to exempt a part of Mankind from the consequences of the Fall, and to save them by His Free Grace, but to leave the rest, without regard to age or moral condition, to their condemnation for the glory of His righteousness.

[3] The Holy Spirit works in the Elect by Irresistible Grace so that they must be converted and saved, while the Grace necessary and sufficient for conversion, faith and salvation is withheld from the rest, although they are externally called and invited by the revealed will of God.

[4] *There was no fourth point mentioned as the speaker went straight on to talk of a fifth point. Presumably this would have been Limited Atonement.*

[5] Those who have received this Irresistible Grace can never totally fall and finally lose it, but are preserved by the same Grace to the end.

So now, that which had started out as a seed with Arminius, is formulated into a negative system. As a positive system they drew up the five articles on the Remonstrance, known as the Five Points of Arminianism, to be accepted by the States of Holland.

[1] Conditional Predestination. God has immutably decreed from Eternity to save those who, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, believe in Jesus Christ, and by the same grace persevere in the obedience of faith to the end, and on the other hand, to condemn the unbelievers and unconverted.

Now just a slight reading of that statement sounds in place. But you will see that the predestination is put into the Person of Christ, and election is of Christ. This is the hidden fish hook in the bait. Therefore, in this statement, election and condemnation are conditioned by foreknowledge, and made dependent upon the foreseen faith or belief of men. So you see we must be careful how we declare the decrees of God. We might find the Remonstrants were sounder than we are in their statements. This is why you must study history in order to minister the things of God to the people of God.

[2] Universal Atonement. They said, and this is there article, "Christ, the Saviour of the world died for all men, and for every man, and His Grace is extended to all."

I know a lot of four-point Calvinists who believe that, don't you? This atoning sacrifice is in and of itself sufficient for the redemption of the whole world, and is intended for all by God the Father. But its inherent sufficiency does not necessarily imply its actual efficiency. The Grace of God may be resisted, and only those who accept it, are actually saved. He who is lost, is lost by his own guilt. Now with reference to that statement, the Arminians agree with the orthodox, the Calvinist, in holding the doctrine of vicarious or substitutionary atonement, in opposition to the Socinians, but they weaken it, and represent its direct effect to be to enable God, consistent with His Justice and Veracity, to enter a New Covenant with Man, under which pardon is conveyed to all men on condition of repentance and faith, actually making Man's cooperation with God that which makes the Atonement effectual unto Salvation. The immediate effect of Christ's death was not the Salvation, but the salvability of sinners, by the removal of legal obstacles, and opening the door for pardon and reconciliation. They reject the doctrine of Limited Atonement which is connected with a Supralapsarian view of Predestination, but disowned by moderate

Calvinists who differ from the Arminians in all other points. Unless some of you throw up your hands in fear, in the event you do not go to my full consistency, and that is to the Supralapsarian position, let me here interject, and state that almost without exception the members who made up the Synod of Dort were Infralapsarians, and some even Sublapsarians, who rejected the Arminian position on the subject of the Atonement. So you see, even if you are Infra- or Sub- lapsarian, you cannot consistently, as a Calvinist, hold the Arminian view of the Atonement.

Now listen to this! The third positive article of faith, saving faith. Man in his fallen state is unable to accomplish anything really and truly good, and therefore also unable to attain to saving faith, unless he be regenerated and renewed by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Every five point Calvinist can say a hearty Amen to that point of the Remonstrants. Now you see the Arminians do not even accept that, today. They do not believe that faith comes as a result of regeneration, a la Billy Graham, it comes as a result of faith. But not even the Remonstrants, not even Episcopus and his disciples would ever have dared to propose that a dead sinner could believe apart from the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit. The only point they agree is in the next point, resistible Grace. That Grace which quickens the dead sinner and enables faith, can be resisted by the dead sinner. How they (the Remonstrants) got that inconsistency is beyond me. Why I could have fellowship with some of the Arminians if they would back round to this position, now listen to this, "Grace is the beginning, continuation and end of our spiritual life, so that Man can neither think, nor do any good, or resist sin, without preventing, cooperating, and assisting Grace." Leave out the word 'cooperating' and you can accept that statement. "But as for the manner of cooperation," you see where it all hinges, "this Grace is not irresistible." So again, they have gotten Man-centred putting the whole ball of wax [a figure drawn from Descartes] into the cooperation of the sinner with God.

Now this brings us to the Synod of Dort. It was the formulation of these points, by the Arminians that eventually, with the influence of James I of England, who is responsible for the K.J.V. of the Bible, and to

settle the strife in Holland, that the national Synod of Dort was called. It has received its name, The Synod of Dort because it met in the city of Dortrecht which was an old fortified town in which the independence of the United Provinces was declared in 1572, and was convened by the States General, November 13 1618. It lasted through May 9 1619, with over 150 sessions. At this time it was not only a matter of settling the Arminian controversy, but also to settle the issue of foreign missions, and to draw up a plan for a better translation of the Scriptures into the Dutch language out of the Hebrew and the Greek, and many other matters. The Synod consisted of 84 members and 18 secular commissioners. 58 were Dutchmen, the rest were foreigners, from England and other parts of Europe. France was denied, although they had delegates of their government attending. It was an open meeting and such great Puritan scholars as Ames attended, observed and wrote concerning the scholarly outcome of the Synod, whilst the Puritan, William Perkins was one of the major targets of the writings of James Arminius. Composed of some of the most outstanding scholars throughout several parts of the world, it was open to others than the delegates themselves.

I have here a book entitled, "Crisis in the Reformed Churches." This book came into my hands only last Saturday and my notes were already complete so that I could not work the very valuable information into this lecture. I believe the book is available and on sale. It is edited by De Jong. In the book you are given the Articles of the Remonstrance as well as the Articles of the Synod of Dort, as well as their renunciation of error which is worth the price of the book alone. I want to read to you from page 17 of this book, describing the Synod itself.

"It was undoubtedly an imposing Assembly, and for learning and piety, as respectable as any ever held since the days of the Apostles. Briningter, a great light of the Swiss churches, was astonished at the amount of knowledge and talent displayed by the Dutch delegates and said, that if ever the Holy Spirit was present in a council, He was present at Dort.

Schultifus of the Palatinate thanked God he was a member of that Synod and placed it high above similar assemblies. Meyer, a delegate from Basle,

whenever afterwards he spoke of this Synod uncovered his head, and exclaimed it was a most holy Synod. A liberal Catholic historian Pauola Ascarti in a letter to Heinsius spoke very highly of it”

And so on it goes. I may perhaps point out that the author of this book is not know for favour towards Calvinism.

So even those who were outside observers could not speak too highly of the solemnity, and of the holy attitude of the men that attended. John Borgamon was elected as its President. The Five Articles of the Remonstrants were rejected unanimously and Five Calvinistic Canons were adopted together with the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. These Five Canons, rearranged from the regular order as they were originally presented by the Synod of Dort now give us the source of what has become known as ‘The Five Points of Calvinism.’ Now as a Calvinist do not go out and display ignorance by saying that Calvin drew up ‘Five Points,’ and put them into his writings, and these are the five points of Calvinism. Calvin taught the total sovereignty of God over the whole of life, and these teachings Soteriologically, can be drawn out of Calvin. But they were systematized in the Five Canons of Dort.

Now let me share with you from an article on pages 59 and 60 of “Crisis in the Reformed Church,” because actually, to put the Canons of Dort into the order with which we are more familiar, beginning with Total Depravity, and going through T.U.L.I.P., you put Articles 3 and 4 together, and at the Head, and then drop the others down under, because first of all is treated Predestination and then Total Depravity. We start with Total Depravity because an understanding of Man’s nature makes it easier to understand the doctrine of Predestination, but they were answering that point in which Arminius attacked the Faith, which was Predestination, and realized that you could not put forth effectively the doctrine of Predestination without first beginning with the Total Depravity of Man. Now again, do not go out and say that T.U.L.I.P. was chosen to demonstrate the Five Points of Calvinism because the Synod of Dort met in Holland, and the Tulip is the national flower of that Country!

You just do not spell Tulip in Dutch that way. Tulip is an anglicizing of the Dutch word. So let us be open and knowledgeable in these things, so that our enemies will not have anymore than they now have, to rant and rave against us!

This Article, Article 4 of the deliverances of the Synod of Dort, by Fred Cooster says, ‘the Arminian attack on the Reformed doctrines began with the attack upon Predestination, and continued to centre on this doctrine.’ Thus the Arminians actually began with the doctrine of Predestination and this has determined the order of the Canons of the Synod of Dort. This is unfortunate and has too often, led superficial readers, or commentators to suggest that Election or Predestination is the central principle of Calvinism from which everything else is deduced. Nothing is farther from the truth, and a responsible reading of the Canons will readily show the falsity of this interpretation. Election is no more the central, or primary doctrine of the Canons, than it is of Calvin himself. But since the doctrine of Election received the brunt of Arminian opposition, not to mention calumny or the slanders of caricature, the Canons of Dort deal first with this subject. Hence the first reference to doctrine begins with Man as fallen in sin and then goes on to speak of the preaching of the Gospel by which Faith comes in to being. Only then, in the sixth article of the first head does Election receive its explanation. It would probably have been better if the Canons had begun with what are now the third and fourth heads of doctrine, the historical order of Creation, Fall and Redemption, which is basic to the entire doctrine of the Canons, which is explicated in further detail, and with which I wholly concur.

But staying with the order I will only very rapidly sum up the Five Canons of Dort, for these are available in any of the Standards dealing with the Creed, which you might read for yourself. But you should read them. You should study them. You should expound them. Then you will learn what true Calvinism is. They first of all bring point one or head one, Divine Predestination and under that several sub-headings. It starts, summing up,

“since all men sinned in Adam and lie under the curse, God would have done no injustice if He had left them to their merited punishment, but in His infinite mercy, He provided a salvation

through the Gospel of Christ, that those who believe in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

“Election is the unchangeable purpose of God whereby before the foundation of the world, He has, merely out of His Grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His own will, chosen from the whole human race, which has fallen through their own fault from their primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, which He from eternity appointed a Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation....and so on”

Election is absolute and unconditional. It is not founded on foreseen faith and holiness.

Secondly, they come to the discussion of the death of Christ, or Limited Atonement. This is very important, and I think I will read this summation of this Article that you might underline it in your thinking, the difference between what Arminius said and what we Calvinists say, because there is a similarity of language.

“According to the sovereign counsel of God, the saving efficacy of the atoning death of Christ extends to all the elect, and to them only, so as to bring them infallibly to salvation.”

Now watch this:

“but intrinsically, the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ is of infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world. This death derives its infinite value and dignity from these considerations. The Person Who submitted to it was not only a man, and perfectly holy, but also the only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and Holy Spirit, which qualifications were necessary to constitute Him a Saviour for us, because it was attended with a sense of the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin. Moreover the promise of the Gospel is that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise together with the command to repent ought to be declared and published among all nations, and all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure, sends the Gospel.”

Now you see we are not talking about a defect of sufficiency in the merit of what the Son of God could do. Anything the Son of God does is of infinite value, but the Arminian says that it had infinite value SO THAT it removed all obstacles, NOT TO SAVE ANYBODY, but to render persons SAVEABLE, and CANNOT save until it is cooperated with by Man! Now they come, in sections 3 and 4, to deal firstly with the corruption of Man, and secondly, to conversion to God. Here is a full treatment of the Total

Depravity of Man, of his full corruption and of his absolute need of the intervening work of God the Holy Spirit to bring him to life, to faith

and to repentance. By the time of the Canons of Dort it was necessary to make a clear cut statement on the fifth point, which is the Perseverance of the saints. It says,

“Whom God called according to His purpose to the communion of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, He delivers also from the dominion and slavery of sin in this life, though not altogether from the body of sin, and from the infirmities of the flesh, so long as they continue in this world.”

Now to conserve time, I am going to leave the full reading of the Canons of Dort to you and encourage you to a close study, and scrutiny of the statements. Now we may note however, before leaving Dort that in opposition to the Canons, that refuted Arminianism and expelled the Arminians from Holland, only for them to return after the death of Prince Maurice of Orange, Episcopus prepared a lengthy defence of the Arminian Articles, and a confession of faith in Dutch in 1621, and in Latin in 1622. Any slight examination of these Articles (Episcopus and Dort) will reveal that the one is totally Man-centred, the other God centred.

This brings me to my final point, Wesleyan or Evangelical Arminianism, as it was previously known under John Wesley, and the scholarly theologians that followed him. We must not speak down their scholarship. Now we can speak down the scholarship of these jelly-fish brained, knucklehead, ignoramuses that call themselves Arminians today, who claim to preach, whereas they do not know doctrine from

a brawl in a barnyard. It is too sad that such ignorance is overwhelming us in this day, and if they would study some doctrine, they would be able to preach at least some Gospel. This would eliminate the necessity of all this entertainment and hamburgers and hotdogs to get people into a religious mood.

Wesleyan Arminianism is traced to John and Charles Wesley, who of course, as you know, opposed George Whitefield, a Calvinistic Methodist leading to Arminianism as it has degenerated into what we know today. The first point in Wesleyan Arminianism is that it violently rejected the doctrine of Predestination. James Arminius did this in a scholarly way, as a professor of theology, but by the time we come to the Wesley's, it is violent. It is a violent rejection. John Wesley declared,

“The elect are all those who suffer, or permit or allow Christ to make them alive.”

This is John Wesley a la Billy Graham! You see, Billy Graham is not anywhere akin to a Baptist, other than his immersion and security of the believer, if he goes to that. I don't know. There - in his, 'Hour of Decision.'

“Will you suffer Christ to make you alive?”

That's John Wesley! Now persons have said, and I hope to burst your balloon at this point,

“Well you know, Charles Wesley never did renounce Calvinism, and his beautiful hymns reveal that he never went as far as his brother John.”

Now Charles was a little more retiring than John. He was a poet far more than John and also lived in a world of fiction, probably more than John

did. But lest you think that Charles Wesley had any sympathy whatsoever with the Doctrines of Grace, and the following does not measure up to some of his beautiful hymns that we sing, let me give you quotes from two poems. He wrote,

“O horrible decree, worthy of whence it came
 Forgive their hellish blasphemy
 Who charge it on the land
 To limit Thee they dare
 Deny their fellow worms a share
 In Thy Redeeming Grace.

Does that sound Calvinistic?

“Increase, if that can be, the perfect hate I
 feel
 To Satan's horrible decree
 That genuine child of Hell
 Which feigns to pass by
 The most of Adam's race
 And leave them in their blood to die
 Shut out from saving Grace.

Does that ring with love for Predestination? Not even Arminius would have used such language.

Now the original doctrine of Methodism was formulated primarily from the 80 plus volumes of the published sermons and works by Wesley, and also by the Wesleyan theologians, such as Fletcher, Fiske and particularly Watson, who are representative of the movement. Here is the sum and substance.

[1] The Universality of Divine Grace, not only in its intention but also in its actual offer.”

First of all you must hate Predestination. You don't even allow that to enter discussion.

No less a person than Philip Schaff said,

“The Wesleyan doctrine of the Universality of Grace resembles the doctrine of Universal Light which removes the necessity of the Holy Scripture in the illumination of the mind in Salvation.”

Now it is assumed under this scheme of the Universality of Divine Grace that all men are born 'not in sin' but in an 'order of sin,' and not 'in Grace' but in an 'order of saving Gace.' Therefore according to Wesley, Adam brought a universal seed of death into the human race, but Christ brought a universal seed of life, which is available for all who do not reject it. He goes on further to point out that by virtue of a Universal Atonement, this is why a Universal Atonement is so necessary to the Wesleyan Arminian Scheme, Man though born in sin is guiltless, until he arrives at the point of personal responsibility. I hope that you have noted that up to this time. from 1560, travelling through history, we have not once come up in the discussions and debates of the Arminians

against the Calvinists, a question of an age of accountability. With the Wesley's it is brought into the Church - that every man, though born in sin, is without guilt until he arrives at the point of personal responsibility. At least they are consistent, because, watch where they continue to go, for the Wesleyan theologians continued to point out in their writings, that all men are actually saved if they do not incur the guilt of neglecting salvation by unbelief. The only sin which can condemn a man, is unbelief. I will tell you that according to that doctrine, and I have said before and I will say again, the greatest mercy we could do is not through Euthanasia, kill old folks and cripples, but knock babies on the head then you would get every one of them in to Heaven, because they never could reach that point of "personal responsibility," to have the sin of unbelief. The worst thing that you are doing is preaching, so that they have the opportunity to reject the Gospel. The sooner we close down mission work the better, because we are sending men to Hell through the sin of unbelief. Now going on to point out, listen how strongly, pulling no punches, right through these theologians, going back to John Wesley, he says that all children,

"All children are saved if they die before the actual committing of sin."

Why? Because of the Universal Atonement. Though born in sin they are notheld guilty before the age of "responsible agency." On the same ground, now stay with me, because this is where we have come, on the same ground, Wesleyan theologians have taught, and do teach, when they have any doctrinal content, that all heathen may be saved who do not neglect their opportunity. For Heaven's sake why did he ever come to the Colonies of America? Why did he preach in the open fields? Why not encourage paganism? Let us die in our heathenism and be guaranteed Salvation, because even after you have believed in Christ, according to the Wesleyan position, then you are liable to lose the whole 'kit and caboodle' and go to Hell after all! Alright, let me give you a direct quote, he says,

"Ability and opportunity are the measure of responsibility, and God requires no more from a man than he can perform. Christ's atonement covers the deficiency of ability in

the case of infants, and the deficiency of opportunity in the case of the heathen."

Get that? Universal Atonement covers the deficiency of ability in the case of infants, and the deficiency of opportunity in the case of the heathen. I say, if that be true, then all are saved who never hear the Gospel! Consistency demands then that we preach to nobody so that all be saved!! If we preach the Gospel to the unconverted we actually put them in danger of Hell by our preaching to them. You see what a nonsensical, not to say, unbiblical conclusion this notion of Universal Atonement leads to?

Another major doctrine of Wesleyan Arminianism is the doctrine of the Witness of the Spirit for assurance of Salvation. This is based on the believer's feeling assured of his present acceptance with God. They claim at the same time that he is guarded against a carnal security by the fear of a total and final fall from Grace.

Thus Methodist doctrine of the assurance of Salvation differs from the Calvinistic doctrine of assurance and perseverance, which is based, not on the subjective feeling of the believer, but rather is rooted and grounded in the Divine promises, and the unchangeable decrees of God's election. Therefore, for the Calvinist, assurance is objectively rooted, out there, in the Word of God, and the promises God has made through that Word, with the witness of the Holy Spirit to the heart, rather than upon the subjective feeling of the individual, resulting from his experience.

The next major doctrine of Wesleyan Arminianism is that of Perfectionism. We are told by Philip Schaff in "Creeds of Christendom" that the Quakers who place so much emphasis upon an inward experience, and "inner light" rather than upon the authority of the Word of God, that the Quakers preceded the Wesleyans in this doctrine. Now Wesleyan Arminian Perfectionism is not sinless perfection or faultlessness. But Wesleyan Arminianism is a sort of imperfect perfectionism from which it is possible to fall again, temporarily, or forever! This may be checked out in his sermons on Temptation, Vol 2, p215, and his sermons on Perfectionism, Vol 1, p356, and Vol 2 p168. This perfectionism of Wesleyan Arminianism is called "Entire Sanctification," in which state it is believed that all voluntary transgressions, sinful

volitions, are excluded. In other words a believer can come to the place in his Christian experience, that he no longer wilfully and voluntarily sins against God, but that all wilful and voluntary transgressions are excluded, although involuntary infirmities may be, and do remain, because of the corruption of Man's nature. According to the prevailing view, that is the original Wesleyan view one which has dominated Wesleyanism, the attainment of imperfect perfectionism is a gradual growth in Grace, but according to others who have been just as outspoken in their views, it is by a special act of faith. That is, it comes as a second work through a special act of faith rather than that which is progressively and gradually grown into. Furthermore, according to this view, rather than being the direct and immediate work of God the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of the sinner, bringing that sinner to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and repentance on the account of sin, it is the result of moral suasion, or the arguments of the minister of the Gospel, that results in a decision of the will to allow the Lord Jesus to save.

I think you may see from this concept of Perfectionism, an element of that which has developed in our own time, called the 'higher life' or 'deeper life' doctrine. I can never keep up with this particular movement because I never know in which direction they are going, whether into the 'higher life' or the 'deeper life.' This has been popularized by such writers as Ruth Paxton and the Keswick Bible Conference Movement, which holds to a form of Wesleyan Perfectionism, that a person can come to a place in his Christian experience that he no longer consciously and wilfully and voluntarily sins against God. The argument used is something of the nature that if you can abstain from sinning for one second, then for two, then a minute, then five, then an hour, and then for a day, and so on, until you have been brought to the abstinence of sin, and perfection.

Also, we may see that most Arminianism though inconsistent as a system, inconsistent with itself, nevertheless as we know it today in Fundamental circles, even Baptist fundamental circles, with the exception of the security of the believer, is Wesleyan Methodism. Therefore we have now come full circle. Not only from Arminius to the settling of the controversy with a denunciation of the

Arminian errors at the Synod of Dort, but now full circle back to an Arminianism that outdoes Arminius himself.

I therefore hope that this somewhat detailed and I know difficult lecture to listen to, has been of some profit, and will be of profit to you who have persevered with me herein.