



Debate with ‘Mr. H.’

Topic : ‘Doctrines of Grace’

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by

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Subject: Calvinism/Arminianism

The following is a debate/discussion on Calvinism/Arminianism. (This one is more a question and answer session). The writer (Mr. H.) is in *italics* and the editors reply (Terry Arnold) is in **bold**. The Arminian 'Mr. H' was soon after convinced and converted to the truths of Sovereign election and the doctrines of Grace.

[Mr. H] *...There are a some things that need explaining...some verses come up in my mind, I would appreciate it if you could explain these to me.*

In regards to Total Depravity, How does Acts 17/30 fit in: 'And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent'.

[Editor TA] **I Don't know what this Scripture on repentance has to do with 'Total Depravity'. Totally depraved persons are still called to repent. This is man's responsibility. To deny this responsibility is 'Hyper-calvinism'. Man is responsible for his own sin and to repent. A 'Calvinist' should still preach this to all. Historic 'Calvinists' like Spurgeon taught both the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. But you cannot reconcile the two terms with logic. No man can understand both and how they work together...it would be similar to trying to work out the 'Trinity'- impossible with human logic.**

[Mr. H] *And what about Acts 11:8 'When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life'. (That to the Gentiles is to All the Gentiles)*

[Editor TA] **This is a specific reference back to Acts 10 where the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit 'promise' 'as well as we' the Jews, in Acts 2. This is referring to the Gentiles as a group of people. The Jews thought they were the only ones to receive the Holy Spirit but were shocked to hear God had also granted the 'repentance of life' to the Gentiles (Acts 10). This simply means that entry into the Body of Christ was now open for the Gentiles.**

[Mr. H] *What about John 1:9 'That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world'.*

[Editor TA] **I don't see what this has to do with man being in 'total depravity'? Does this Scripture make man somehow less depraved? But anyway - let's read on further...9 'That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world**

was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God’.

Jesus was and is the ‘*light of the world*’ but not one seeks him or chooses him. Is.42:6 refers to this also as a light to the Gentiles (world). The carnal mind cannot understand the things of God...before we were saved we were ‘*children of wrath*’. How does this Scripture negate ‘total depravity’? (such as in Jer.17:9; etc)?

[Mr. H] *...And John 12:32,33? ‘And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. 33 This he said, signifying what death he should die’*

[Editor TA] Again, not sure what this has to do at all with ‘*Total depravity*’. Is the ‘*all men*’ every person? If so why are not all saved? (John also says ‘all’ that God draws, none are lost).

[Mr. H] *...and Romans 2:11,12,13,14,15,16 ‘For there is no respect of persons with God. 12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; 13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) 16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel’.*

[Editor TA] What has this to do with ‘Total Depravity’? The ‘*respect*’ here is referring to sin and judgement. All men will be judged on this equally. Whether in or out of the law...that is all this Scripture is saying?...

[Mr. H] In regards to unconditional election: Romans 8:28,29 ‘*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 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’*

To me that says that He knew from the foundation of the earth who would be saved, He predestinated those He foreknew.

[Editor TA] Yes, exactly. But I cannot see how this negates ‘unconditional election’. God cannot foreknow something He has not foreordained. If so, God is not sovereign in omnipotence and omniscience.

God still predestined people. The word ‘predestinated’ is also used without ‘foreknowledge’ being involved: Eph.1:11 *‘In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will’*.

Which group of people could He have seen repenting volitionally in the future? Certainly not the Adamic race. Romans 8 simply says he already knew who he would predestinate. The word ‘predestinate’ means to fore-ordain, to *pre* determine...He chose us *‘before the foundation of the world’*. ‘Predestination’ is used at least 6 times I know of - Acts 4:28; Rom.8:29,30; 1Cor.2:7; Eph.1:5,11. So I have to believe it no matter what it is based on.

Also, the *‘who would be saved’* in your thinking is not in this Scripture. It does not say he foreknew *‘who would be saved’*. It says he foreknew those he ‘predestinated’ (past tense) to be sanctified. (Sanctification is the goal of predestination in every case).

Read this: Eph.1:4, 5 *‘According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be HOLY and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will’*.

Predestination is always linked with sanctification.

[Mr. H]...1 Peter 1:2 *‘Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied’*.

Elected on the foreknowledge of God that they would trust Jesus and be saved. God knows who will be saved and who will reject His gospel.

[Editor TA] This Scripture does not at all deny ‘unconditional election’, but actually teaches it. It simply says God foreknew who the elect are...(*‘from the foundation of the world’*).

The foreknowledge here is not to ‘salvation’ but to sanctification (see above). The verse says nothing about trusting Jesus and being saved. But of course God knows who will be saved - this is naturally what foreknowledge is all about. The word ‘elect’ is used many times. It is obvious to me God elects people to at least the process of sanctification. And we don’t get sanctification without being saved. A thought: ...Is any

injustice done by God electing even one person to salvation and leaving the rest to their sin and rightful judgement?

[Mr. H] *On the subject of ‘Limited Atonement’ - if it is limited, does that mean Jesus didn’t die for the whole world and only just some of it? Does that mean God’s grace is limited and not universal grace. That seems contrary to everything I have ever been taught from the bible.*

[Editor TA] **Christ’s atonement was *sufficient* for the sins of the whole world but ultimately only *applied* (or ‘effective’) to some...because not everyone is saved. I personally do not use the term ‘limited Atonement’. Bible teachers such as Spurgeon mostly used ‘*Particular redemption*’ as it fits Scripture; e.g. Jn.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...39 And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day...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...65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father*’.**

[Mr. H] *John 1:29 ‘The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’. Is this only part of the world?*

[Editor TA] **Agreed, it is not ‘part of the world’ but the sin of the whole world. But this is not referring to people but to the every sin ever committed.**

[Mr. H] *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’.*

[Editor TA] **Yes, the sins of the whole world.**

[Mr. H] *...Spurgeon didn’t believe that God only saved whom He chose (apart from all) but believed that he should preach the gospel to all people: ‘to men who have been totally depraved from the sole of the foot even to the head’ (Spurgeon)...*

[Editor TA] **Wrong in the first part. Spurgeon clearly and many times preached the ‘Calvinistic’ doctrine that God only saves those He chose (past tense in Scripture - ‘*from foundation of the world*’)! Scripture itself teaches God chooses and those he chooses he saves to the uttermost.**

But you are right in the second part, in that Spurgeon believed in preaching to *all* who were 'Totally Depraved' because he did not (and we do not) know who the 'elect' are.

For your info...Spurgeon unequivocally taught 'limited atonement' in full, in that the atonement was applied to some. It was then called '*particular redemption*'. He mentioned and taught this several times. What Spurgeon is only teaching in your quote is that the Gospel must be preached to all...he mentioned many times that he did not know who the 'elect' were.

Spurgeon was a full and strong 'Calvinist' - 'all 5 points', which he taught on many occasions and without flinching. Many of the modern books written by him have the word 'Calvinist' and other Calvinistic references *deleted*! I have a book called '*The Forgotten Spurgeon*' by Iain Murray which shows this clearly.

Here is a quote by Spurgeon (I have many of these...you will not find them in modern books - they have been cleverly deleted!): '*I have my own opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified unless we preach what is nowadays called Calvinism. It is a nick name to call it Calvinism. Calvinism is the Gospel and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the Gospel...unless we...exalt the electing...unless we base it on the special, particular redemption [now called 'Limited Atonement'] of his elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross...*'

Here is a question 'Calvinists' will put to you and me: If Christ sacrificed his Son for all then how can He send some people to Hell?...If the atonement is not 'limited' in the end then why is there any Hell? It is a fact that Christ died for all of the sins of the world and ultimately for all of the sins of some of the people. His blood was sufficient for all but ultimately in the end atoned only for some? what is the end result of the atonement on the cross? - will it end up being for all or for some? With foresight of what Scripture already teaches (that 'few' will end up atoned and in heaven), will it therefore be limited ('particular') or universal? The answer has to be 'limited' in the ultimate sense above...

An interesting thought: ...Was the OT atonement and sacrifices for the whole world including the heathens or only for the few - Israel? Why did God not allow it for all?

Some Scriptures that 'Calvinists' use: Matt 1:21 - Why did he say '*his people*'...why not 'all people'?; Jn.10:11,15,26; Jn.17:9 - who is the '*them*'?

[Mr. H] On *'Irresistible grace'*: what about 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! Jesus said would He wanted them to be saved but they resisted Him'*.

[Editor TA] Firstly, I do not use or like the term *'Irresistible Grace'* which is a modern term. I prefer what the Bible teachers (including Spurgeon) of old taught - *'Effectual Calling'* - which is clearly taught in John chapter 6.

Your Matthew 23 Scripture is about *Israel as a nation* only, nothing to do with resisting NT salvation to an individual through the Holy Spirit.

[Mr. H] 2 Peter 3:9 *'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance'*.

[Editor TA] Not sure what this has to do with *'irresistible Grace'*? Who is Peter speaking to? Note the word *'to USWARD'*! This Epistle is specifically written to the *'beloved'*: *'beloved, I now write unto you'* (vs.1)...*'beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing...'* (vs.8)...*'Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things...'* (vs.14)...*'You therefore, beloved, seeing you know these things before...'* (vs.17). The primary context is about the end of this age and the sureness of the Lord's coming for his *'beloved'*. It is a clear exhortation to the *'beloved'* to be patient and not to listen to the false teachers (context of previous verses) who were scoffing at the promise of the *'coming'*!

This verse is actually a verse for *Eternal Security* and always was until later. Arminian thinking! Who is the *'usward'*? One primary interpretation rule is this - *who* is the passage speaking to? How many times is *'beloved'* mentioned in the passage? Paul continues even speaking to the *'beloved'* in the verses following: *'Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought YOU to be in all holy conversation and godliness'* (vs.11).

Commentary by Matthew Henry: 2Pet.3:9 *'What men count slackness, is long-suffering, and that to us-ward; it is giving more time to his own people, to advance in knowledge and holiness, and in the exercise of faith and patience, to abound in good works'*.

[Mr. H] *Proverbs 1:24,25 'Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; 25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:*

[Editor TA] **The context is to Israel by Solomon and to young men. Nothing to do with salvation in the NT to an unsaved individual. Israel resisted God often.**

[Mr. H] *'And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years'.*

Why does He have to strive if He is irresistible?

[Editor TA] **This is not about God giving 'irresistible grace' in salvation but God putting up with the evil of man. God is not striving with man to be saved here. The context is the evil of mankind (Total Depravity again)...and a warm up to the flood. Natural man resists God greatly! This is an OT Scripture that has nothing to do with 'irresistible grace' in the New Testament salvation. This is simply speaking about the patience of God with man...**

[Mr. H] *Galatians 2:21 'I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain'. How can Paul frustrate that which is 'irresistible?'*

[Editor TA] **This has nothing to do with 'Irresistible Grace' in salvation to unsaved. This is speaking about going back to the things of the law as a Christian...a fact which many Christians can do. Any of us Christians can 'frustrate the grace of God' in this way. He is not talking about the unsaved here but the Galatian Christians. John 6:37 clearly says that all the father gives to the son 'will come' - this is why 'Calvinists' taught 'effectual calling' (now dubbed '*Irresistible Grace*').**

[Mr. H] *On 'perseverance of the saints' I believe that God keeps those whom He has saved...My problem with 'Calvinism' is that it acts as a damper to spreading the gospel. Because if God chooses only whom he will and His grace is irresistible, then I see no need as you said for the distribution of tracts or the 'going into the highways and by ways to seek and to 'save' those which are lost'.*

[Editor TA] **I never said we should not go and preach to whoever and wherever and whenever...All the Reformations, revivals and 'awakenings' in history have been under Calvinistic preaching and theology! All the founders of the Baptist movement were Calvinistic in**

doctrine. Till the 19th Century the Southern Baptists were Calvinistic. All these groups saw the need much more than today's Arminians for preaching and evangelising! So why was it not a '*dampener*' to them?

Why is *praying* to you not a '*dampener*' since God foresees what you will pray and the exact outcome? What is the difference between God foreseeing who will be saved or elected and God foreseeing what you will pray and the outcome? We pray and witness because God tells us to do so in His Word.

The best periods of evangelism and the best evangelists in history have all been Calvinistic! The problem with your logic here (the '*dampening*' thought) is you say: that God '*elects*' anyway so why would any '*Calvinist*' consider evangelising? But the true Calvinist evangelists of the past saw it the exact opposite: They said: We don't know who the '*elect*' are and it is God's command to preach and evangelise. We do it for God, for man, and because of the Word of God...and they did it with great zeal and with amazing results that would make us today look '*dead*'!

Did Spurgeon have trouble being '*dampened*'? What about Moody, Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Wycliffe, JC Ryle, Martyn Lloyd Jones, Luther, Bunyan,...too many to mention. What about the modern day counterparts - Macarthur, Sproul, etc. Macarthur has one of the biggest churches in the US and they don't lose very many people...the '*retention rate*' of salvations is very high...and they are evangelistic...

To me I don't have to see results, I just keep preaching the Gospel to all and whenever I can and wherever I can. If no one gets saved in ten years it will not change me at all because '*soul winning*' is not done by us but by God and we are only asked to preach the Gospel.

Arminianism drives people to have to witness or feel like they are not doing enough...

[Final note from editor to Mr. H]

The problem with the '*TULIP*' points is that they have a negative slant - this was because they were formulated by the Synod of Dort in 1619 to *refute* a '*heresy*' of Arminianism (1610). Arminianism was NEW. Calvinism goes back to the church fathers. All the creeds and '*confessions*' were Calvinistic. These Creeds do not prove what the church must believe but what the church *has* believed. Arminianism is also connected closely with Roman Catholicism. You can trace the '*Calvinistic*' line from the primitive church fathers through Augustine through to Wycliffe, Huss, Luther, Calvin the Reformation churches, etc.

The other line essentially comes through Constantine to Pelagius (the forerunner of Arminianism - Pelagius was the first to oppose Augustine and teach human 'free will'/ability in salvation and to emphasise mans part)...to various Popes...to the breakaway Methodists...to the Holiness movement (Wesley)...to Pentecostalism...to the modern ecumenical church? (Wesley as a Reformer was a rare exception to Calvinism, but if you look at his writings he is much less 'Arminian' than the modern Weslyans and Arminians realise).

Arminianism essentially says salvation is accomplished by God and man. Man determines or plays a part in whether he will be saved and salvation therefore depends somewhat on man. But the Bible says we were not born again by the 'will of man' (Jn.1:13). Anything that makes it man's work or man's doing is not 'Grace' alone.

Although many of the above views are mine, I have not put all of my views - some are just what Calvinism teaches and uses to defend. You will probably brand me a 'Calvinist' anyway now but I have put what I know are the views of true 'Calvinism' and not the Calvinism that is attacked 99% by people who don't know what they are talking about and use extra Biblical logic.

There are also some 'degrees' in 'Calvinism'. But I don't like the term 'Calvinist'. I hope I am just teaching what the Bible teaches. I do see Total Depravity clearly. I do see election clearly – I cannot escape the word. I do see a form of 'limit' in the ultimate end of atonement depending on how one sees the term and how it is described. I do strongly see that God chooses man and man has nothing to do with this at all in 'Justification'. Man never chooses God for salvation (Jn.16:15,19). The initial 'spark' must come from God and what He starts He finishes! I do see 'perseverance of the saints' (now often called 'Eternal Security'), although I confess when I was a Pentecostal I was blind to this.

I am also far more evangelistic and fruitful than ever before. I am also far more relaxed in the sovereignty of God - that I don't have to go out into the 'byways'...but God sends me out in His time and His way. One Scripture that says it all for me in this Calvinism/Arminian debate: Jn.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...65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father'.*

About the Author and the Ministry

Terry Arnold holds a Doctorate in Theology (Dth), a Masters degree (MABS) and several diplomas. He was founder and president of *South Pacific Bible Institute*, a Bible college training and equipping people for ministry. In addition he was the founder of Hervey Bay Bible Church in Queensland, Australia. He has for 25 years served as an elder and then pastor.

Terry is the author of several books and is involved in a full time ministry of *teaching, informing* and *equipping* the church. He is also editor of a growing worldwide publication '*Diakrisis (Australia)*'.

His ministry includes preaching/teaching and conducting seminars and conferences in a wide range of churches and colleges.

TA Ministries is a non-denominational and non-profit faith ministry founded in 1989 when the book '*To Catholics Whom I Love*' was written by Terry Arnold. This book went through several re-prints and served as a fruitful outreach to Roman Catholics.

In 1996 the ministry became a full-time operation with the introduction of a free newsletter, later named '*Diakrisis (Australia)*'.

Diakrisis is published bi-monthly to *teach, inform* and *equip* the church of Biblical truths and to warn of false teaching. It has also been a valuable reference aid to hundreds of pastors/elders.