

Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism
(Ken Talbot and Gary Crampton)
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I. When Two Creeds Meet (Chapter One)

A. Theological Confrontation has been the norm for the church

1. This isn't all bad - 1 Cor. 11:18-19

B. The two opposing creeds of Calvinism and Arminianism

1. Neo-fundamentalists have failed in dealing with God's sovereignty

2. The standard is sola scriptura

C. The historical faith of the Christian church is Calvinism

1. Quotes by C.H. Spurgeon and Loraine Boettner

"I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what is nowadays called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel . . . unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace . . . unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called." [Spurgeon, page 18]

D. Additional Scriptures

E. Questions for further study

II. The Sovereignty of God (Chapter Two)

A. Sovereignty means:

". . . that God is God in all of His Holy attributes, His works of creation, providence, and salvation. God is the first cause of all that exists, and nothing exists which is not foreordained by Him." [25]

B. If anything were to exist independently of God, it would, of necessity, be co-equal with God

"Since God created all things, He first had to know all things before they came into existence. All things which exist, physical and spiritual, proceed from the mind of the all knowing God." [26]

C. God's purposes encompass the salvation of mankind

D. God is the final cause of:

1. Creation and preservation (Rev. 4:11)
2. Government (Prov. 21:1)
3. Christ's sufferings (Acts 2:23)
4. Election and reprobation (Rom. 9:15-16)
5. Regeneration (James 1:18)
6. Sanctification (Phil. 2:13)
7. Believer's sufferings (1 Peter 3:17)
8. Of man's life and destiny (James 4:15)
9. The seemingly minutia of life (Matt. 10:29)
10. The destiny of the nations (Daniel 2:21; Isaiah 40:15)
11. Secret and revealed will of God (Deut. 29:29)

E. God always acts in keeping with His perfect attributes

F. God's decrees are:

1. Founded upon divine wisdom (Eph. 1:11)
2. Eternal, before the foundation of the world (Psa. 33:11)
3. Efficacious (Prov. 19:21)
4. Unchangeable (Job 23:13)
5. Unconditional (Acts 2:23; Job 42:2)
6. All inclusive:
 - a. The good actions of men (Eph. 2:10)
 - b. The wicked actions of men (Prov. 16:4)
 - c. Seemingly contingent events (Prov. 16:33)
 - d. The means as well as the end in salvation (2 Thess. 2:13)
 - e. The duration of man's life (Job 14:5)
 - f. The place of man's habitation (Acts 17:26)

G. Additional Scriptures

H. Questions

III. Man and the Plight of Sin (Chapter Three)

A. The question, "How far did man fall?"

1. Arminianism holds that the human race was seriously affected by the fall
2. Calvinism holds that all men are in a state of total depravity and inability

B. What about the will?

1. Calvinism contends that man does have freedom in his will in the sense of moral responsibility
 - a. It's important to note that man's will is not neutral - it is bent toward sin

"Man's will is not autonomous and undetermined. It is always determined by its desires, its inward dispositions." [39]

2. Note Jer. 13:23; Matt. 12:35; Eph. 2:1; 4:18-19; Rom. 8:7

C. Additional Scriptures

D. Questions

IV. Divine Election or Human Decision (Chapter Four)

A. Election is unconditional

Election is not salvation, it precedes salvation; it takes place supra-history whereas salvation takes place in history.

B. Election does not mean "to ratify" as Arminians contend

1. It means "to select" or "choose out of"

C. Not equated with foresight

"The word 'foreknowledge' itself is never used in reference to events or actions—that is, as advance knowledge of what one would or might do—but always of person, whose lives are affected by that foreknowledge rather than the other way around." [James Boice, 49]

C. Scriptures cited. defending unconditional election

D. Additional Scriptures

E. Questions

V. The Atonement of Christ (Chapter Five)

A. The atonement of Christ was sufficient to save all men, but efficient in redeeming the elect

"The atonement of Christ "was an objective work accomplished in history which removed all legal barriers against those to whom it was to be applied." [Boettner, 57]

1. The atonement is limited, not in its power, but in its purpose

B. The atonement of Christ benefits all men indirectly

1. This is God's goodness as per 1 Tim. 4:10 and Matt. 5:45

2. The full sufficiency of the atonement is the basis for the universal offer of the gospel (John 3:16; Matt. 11:28-30)

3. Redeems the created order but not all individual (Romans 8)

C. God has not been pleased to save all men and did not die for all men

D. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

"Either all sins (including unbelief) have been atoned for and no one will be lost, or not all sins have been atoned for and all men will give an account for some of their sin, thus, no one will be saved." [59]

E. Arminianism contends that Christ died to make salvation possible for all, but actual for none

F. Scriptures cited

G. An argument for limited atonement based on the doctrine of perichoresis (appropriations) which contends that the Three Persons of the Godhead work in harmony with each other

1. The Father has chosen some to be saved and the Spirit regenerates this same number which the Son redeems

H. For the Calvinist the atonement is like a narrow bridge that goes all the way across the gulf between God and man; for the Arminian it is a wide bridge that only goes halfway across

I. Four possible answers to the question, "For whom did Christ die?"

1. He died for all the sins of all men

2. He died for some of the sins of all men

3. He died for none of the sins of all men

4. He died for all of the sins of some men

J. Additional Scriptures

K. Questions

VI. Calling Men to Christ (Chapter Six)

A. Everyone is born dead in sin and lost - no one can be saved apart from the sovereign and effective work of God

1. How do we call men to Christ?

a. Wrong approaches

(1) Altar calls are not biblical

(2) Pithy sayings liked "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life" and/or "Christ died for you" are improper

b. Biblical approach

(1) Proclaim and share the Gospel with the lost!

(a) We must remember that it's God's role to save, not ours

2. The outward and inward call

a. What makes up the "outward call" of the Gospel (what we are to share)?

(1) A biblical presentation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God

(2) A call to repent and believe in Christ as Lord and Savior

(3) The promise of forgiveness of sin in Him alone

b. The inward effectual call (irresistible call)

3. Union with Christ

B. Additional Scriptures

C. Questions

VII. Perseverance, or Once Saved Always Saved? (Chapter Seven)

- A. Arminian theology and the possible loss of salvation
- B. Calvinistic theology and the belief that the Triune God is the sole author of salvation from start to finish

1. We are kept by God's power and yet we are responsible to persevere

a. Scriptures cited

b. False professions - "A mere profession of faith saves no one"

(1) Examples include Simon the Magician (Acts 8); Demas (2 Tim. 4:10)

2. What about good works?

a. These are essential, but they are works of necessity, not works of merit

3. Glorification

a. Stage one: When we die (with Christ but without a resurrection body)

b. Stage two: When the believer receives his resurrection body

"There is a second stage which reaches even greater glory. This state will occur in the final day, when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to usher in the Kingdom of glory. On that day, Christian man will be clothed with his resurrection body." [90]

c. Westminster Confession, Chapter 32, Sections 1-3:

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

II. At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up with the self-same bodies, and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls forever.

III. The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonor; the bodies of the just, by his Spirit, unto honor, and be made conformable to his own glorious body.

C. Additional Scriptures

D. Questions

VIII. Divine Providence or Christian Humanism? (Chapter Eight)

A. God's Providence = God is in control of every detail of life, history, and creation

"Divine providence is that work of God by which He preserves all His creatures, is active in all that transpires in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end." [Louis Berkhof]

B. Three elements to divine providence:

1. Divine preservation

This is the continuous work of the Triune God wherein He upholds all things.

2. Divine concurrence

This is the work of God wherein He cooperates with all of His creation, causing it to act in accordance with His sovereign will. God is the first cause of all things and sovereignly uses second causes (forces of nature, the will of man) to accomplish His purposes. These second causes do not work in any way independently of God (Psalm 104:20-21, 30)

3. Divine Government

This is the work of God wherein He continually rules all things, to the point where they actually answer to the purpose of their existence. This is God's universal rule.

C. The all-inclusive nature of God's providence

1. He rules over the entire universe (Psalm 103:19)

2. He rules over the physical world (Psalm 104:14)

3. He rules over the spiritual world (Hebrews 1:7)

4. He rules over the animal kingdom (Matthew 6:26)

5. God's hand directs the affairs of nations (Job 12:23)

6. God superintends every part of life, from conception to death (Psalm 139:16)

7. God controls those things that seem to us to be contingent (Prov. 16:33)

8. God sovereignly protects the righteous working all things for their good (Rom. 8:28)

9. God meets the needs of His elect (Phil. 4:19)

10. God's providence brings about answers to prayer (Matt. 7:7,11)

11. God punishes the wicked (Psalm 11:6)

D. God's providence rightly understood does not lead to hyper-Calvinism

E. The Belgic Confession - Article 13: The Doctrine of God's Providence

"We believe that this good God, after he created all things, did not abandon them to chance or fortune but leads and governs them according to his holy will, in such a way that nothing happens in this world without his orderly arrangement.

Yet God is not the author of, nor can he be charged with, the sin that occurs. For his power and goodness are so great and incomprehensible that he arranges and does his work very well and justly even when the devils and wicked men act unjustly.

We do not wish to inquire with undue curiosity into what he does that surpasses human understanding and is beyond our ability to comprehend. But in all humility and reverence we adore the just judgments of God, which are hidden from us, being content to be Christ's disciples, so as to learn only what he shows us in his Word, without going beyond those limits.

This doctrine gives us unspeakable comfort since it teaches us that nothing can happen to us by chance but only by the arrangement of our gracious heavenly Father. He watches over us with fatherly care, keeping all creatures under his control, so that not one of the hairs on our heads (for they are all numbered) nor even a little bird can fall to the ground²⁰ without the will of our Father.

In this thought we rest, knowing that he holds in check the devils and all our enemies, who cannot hurt us without his permission and will.

For that reason we reject the damnable error of the Epicureans, who say that God involves himself in nothing and leaves everything to chance."

F. Additional Scriptures

G. Questions

IX. Is God the Author of Sin? (Chapter Nine)

A. Many would say that if God is indeed in control of everything, and sin exists, he must be the author of sin

1. This does not follow (no contradiction or conundrum)

"We do not see that it is impossible for God to predestinate an act to come to pass by means of the deliberate choice of specific individuals." [John Gerstner]

"God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the Author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extends itself to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, but such as has joined with it a most wise dispensation, to His own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceeds only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author of approver of sin." [Westminster Confession]

See also the London Baptist Confession, Chapter 3, Section 1 and Chapter 5, Section 4.

B. Sin is part of God's plan for history

1. The reformed Christian maintains that God has foreordained sin

a. If sin was outside the plan of God then God does not control all things and some things come into being apart from his sovereign will

C. God's secret and revealed will (Deut. 29:29)

Note Acts 2:23. The secret will of God was to have Christ crucified. The revealed will was that men not violate the sixth commandment, as they did in killing an innocent man. Both revealed and secret work together.

D. First and Second causes

God is the first cause of all that exists, including sin. But he is not the author of sin. The authors of sin are the second causes and only second causes sin.

E. Various attempts to reconcile the existence of evil

1. Finitism (God is finite)

2. Fatalism (this denies man's responsibility)

3. A denial of evil (cf. Christian Science cult)

F. What is the nature of evil?

According to Augustine, it was merely the privation of good. He wrote:

"For evil has no positive nature; but the loss of good has received the name evil." Augustine also maintained that the existence of evil proves the existence of God and absolute good.

G. The decree with reference to sin was a permissive decree, but not a mere permissive decree

H. David Hume

Hume maintained that, 1) Either God was not powerful enough to eliminate evil; or, 2) He is either the cause of it or he is not good.

Hume's argument fails because, 1) As a result of God's decree sin came about as an act of rebellion against Him, not as a direct act of God (as author); 2) Not all pain and suffering is sinful; 3) God has told us that someday He will eliminate sin.

I. Additional Scriptures

J. Questions

X. Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism (Chapter 10)

A. Some errors in thinking

1. Hyper-Calvinism
2. Equating Supralapsarianism with hyper-Calvinism
3. Arminianism

B. The history of Calvinism

1. The theology of the Apostle Paul
2. Early Fathers
 - a. The second and third centuries did not produce a systematic theology treatise, but the writings of these men reveals strong leanings toward what we call Calvinism
 - b. Augustine
3. Thomas Aquinas upheld predestination
4. The Reformation
5. English Puritans
6. Eighteenth through twentieth centuries

C. Questions

XI. Appendix A: A Display of Arminianism (John Owen)

XII. Appendix B: Calvinism in America (Lorraine Boettner)

A. The Pilgrim Fathers were all Calvinistic

1. 2/3 of the colonial population were trained in the school of Calvin

B. The large role that the Presbyterians played in the American Revolution

1. In England it was referred to as "The Presbyterian Rebellion"

C. American Democracy was born of Reformed Christianity

1. The Presbyterians were solidly in favor of independence from England

a. The "Mecklenburg Declaration"

The M.D. was produced by the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians of North Carolina in 1775. It was a declaration and a complete system of government that Jefferson drew heavily from in writing the DOI.

2. Many claimed that John Calvin was the virtual founder of America

D. Calvinism and representative government

XII. Appendix C: Justification by Faith Alone (Ken Talbot and Gary Crampton)

"Christ saves no one whom He does not sanctify at the same time. . . . Thus it is clear how true it is that we are justified not without works, yet not through works, since our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness . . . the Lord freely justifies His own in order that He may at the same time restore them to true righteousness by sanctification of His Spirit." [John Calvin, Institutes, III:16:1; III:3:19]

"But although works tend in no way to the cause of justification, yet when the elect sons of God were justified freely by faith, at the same time their works are esteemed righteous by the same gratuitous liberality. Thus, it will still remain true, that faith without works justifies, although this needs prudence and a sound interpretation; for this proposition, that faith without works justifies is true and yet false, according to the different senses which it bears. The proposition that faith without works justifies by itself is false, because faith without works is void." [John Calvin, Commentaries on Ezekiel 18:14-17]