

# Election and Predestination

“Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby, before the foundations of the world were laid, He hath constantly decreed by His counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation as vessels made to honour. Wherefore they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God be called according to God's purpose by His Spirit working in due season; they through grace obey the calling; they be justified freely; they be made sons of God by adoption; they be made like the image of His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works; and at length by God's mercy they attain to everlasting felicity.”

Anglican 39 Articles- Number 17

## The Calvinistic “Tulip”

T- total depravity. This doesn't mean people are as bad as they can be. It means that sin is in every part of one's being, including the mind and will, so that a man cannot save himself. His will is not free.

U- unconditional election. God chooses to save people unconditionally; that is, they are not chosen on the basis of their own merit.

L- limited atonement. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross was for the purpose of saving the elect.

I – irresistible grace. When God has chosen to save someone. He will.

P- perseverance of the saints. Those people God chooses cannot lose their salvation; they will continue to believe. If they fall away, it will be only for a time,

## Arminianism

1. Humans are naturally unable to make any effort towards salvation
2. Salvation is possible only by God's grace, which cannot be merited.
3. No works of human effort can cause or contribute to salvation.
4. God's election is conditional on faith in the sacrifice and Lordship of Jesus Christ.
5. Christ's atonement was made on behalf of all people.
6. God allows his grace to be resisted by those who freely reject Christ.
7. Believers are able to resist sin but are not beyond the possibility of falling from grace through persistent, unrepented of sin.
8. God predestines some to be saved by looking into their future and seeing who will believe in Christ and who will not. If he sees that a person is going to come to Faith then he will predestine that person to be saved. What God does in his predestining work is to give confirmation to the decision He knows people will make on their own.

## Core Beliefs of Arminianism

1. Prior to being *drawn and enabled*, one is *unable to believe... able only to resist*.
2. Having been *drawn and enabled*, but prior to regeneration, one is *able to believe... able also to resist*.
3. After one *believes*, God then regenerates; one is *able to continue believing... able also to resist*.
4. Upon *resisting* to the point of *unbelief*, one is *unable again to believe... able only to resist*.

## Differences

- Nature of election – Arminians hold that election to eternal salvation has the condition of faith attached. The Calvinist doctrine of unconditional election is not conditional upon any human effort, so faith is not a condition of salvation but the divinely apportioned means to it. In other words, Arminians believe that they owe their election to their faith, whereas Calvinists believe that they owe their faith to their election.
- Nature of grace – Arminians believe that through God's grace, he restores free will concerning salvation to all humanity, and each individual, therefore, is able either to accept the Gospel call through faith or resist it through unbelief. Calvinists hold that God's grace to enable salvation is given only to the elect and irresistibly leads to salvation.
- Extent of the atonement – Arminians hold to a universal drawing and universal extent of atonement instead of the Calvinist doctrine that the drawing and atonement is limited in extent to the elect only. Both sides believe the invitation of the gospel is universal and "must be presented to everyone [they] can reach without any distinction."
- Perseverance in faith – Arminians believe that future salvation and eternal life is secured in Christ and protected from all external forces but is conditional on remaining in Christ and can be lost through apostasy. Traditional Calvinists believe in the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, which says that because God chose some unto salvation and actually paid for their particular sins, he keeps them from apostasy and that those who do apostatize were never truly regenerated (that is, born again) or saved.

## Corporate View of Election

According to this view of corporate election God never chose individuals to elect to salvation but rather He chose to elect the believing church to salvation.

Let me explain this in hopefully understandable terms.

“What Paul says about election and predestination must be seen from a corporate perspective which views the group as primary. Individuals act as members of the group to which they belong and what happens to them happens by virtue of their membership in the group.

The church is elect and predestined not individuals- the elect (ie the church) is called, justified, glorified, holy and blameless, adopted as God’s children, redeemed, recipient of an inheritance, for the praise of God’s glory, the recipient of the Holy Spirit, created to do good works.

So election and predestination under this view refer to the corporate body of Christ- the Church, and this view understands individuals as being elected and predestined only in as far as they are associated with the Church through a living faith in Christ.

“Summary: Concerning election and predestination, we might use the analogy of a great ship on its way to heaven. The ship (the church) is chosen by God to be his very own vessel. Christ is the Captain and Pilot of this ship. All who desire to be part of this elect ship and its Captain can do so through a living faith in Christ, by which they come on board the ship. As long as they are on the ship, in company with the ship’s Captain, they are among the elect. If they choose to abandon the ship and Captain, they cease to be part of the elect. Election is always only in union with the Captain and his ship. Predestination tells us about the ship’s destination and what God has prepared for those remaining on it. God invites everyone to come aboard the elect ship through faith in Jesus Christ.”

*Life in the Spirit Study Bible pp. 1854,1855*

### **Christ as the ‘Elected Predestined One’**

“the most conspicuous feature of Eph 1 v3 – 2v10 is the phrase ‘in Christ’ which occurs 12 times in Eph 1 vs 3-14 alone...Christ himself is the chosen one, the predestined one. Whenever one is incorporated into him by grace through faith, one comes to share in Jesus special status as chosen of God.

### **Further Considerations**

a) Calvin’s view is offensive to fallen mankind.

b) But isn’t Calvin’s understanding of election unfair-

“With regard to....unconditional election, I believe, that God, before the Foundation of the World, did unconditionally elect certain persons to do certain works, as Paul to preach the gospel: that he has unconditionally elected some nations to receive peculiar privileges, the Jewish nation in particular: that he has unconditionally elected some nations to hear the gospel....That he has unconditionally elected some persons to peculiar advantages, both with regard to temporal and spiritual things: and I do not deny (though I cannot prove that is so) that he has unconditionally elected some persons (thence eminently styled “the elect”) to eternal glory. But I cannot believe, that all those who are not thus elected to glory must perish everlastingly; or that there is one soul on Earth who has not, ever had a possibility of escaping eternal damnation.” *Wesley*

c) Is there any assurance in the Arminian view?

d) There’s no point in evangelism if we adopt Calvin’s view

e) But what about free will?

f) Faith becomes a “work”. If the ultimate determining factor in whether we are saved or not is our own decision to accept Christ, then we may think we deserve some credit for the fact that we are saved. We were wise enough in our judgment to decide to believe in Christ.

g) Contradictions

“The other possibility is that God wills not to save all, even though he is willing to save all, because there is something else that he wills more, which would be lost if he exerted his sovereign power to save all. This is the solution that I as a Calvinist affirm along with Arminians.... Both can say that God wills for all to be saved. But then when queried why all are not saved both Calvinists and Arminians answer that God is committed to something even more valuable than saving all.

The difference between Calvinists and Arminians lies not in whether there are two wills in God, but in what they say this higher commitment is. What does God will more than saving all? The answer given by Arminians is that human self determination and the possible resulting love relationship with God are more valuable than saving all people by sovereign, efficacious grace. The answer given by Calvinists is that the greater value is the manifestation of the full range of God’s glory in wrath and mercy (Rom 9: 22-23) and the humbling of man so that he enjoys given all credit to God for his salvation (1 Cor, 1: 29)

J. Piper