

# The Origins of Arminianism

CALVINISM	ARMINIANISM
T Total Depravity	Total Depravity
U Unconditional Election	Prevenient Grace
L Limited Atonement	Atonement for all
I Irresistible Grace	Resistible Grace
P Perseverance of the Saints	Security in Christ

This is the next chapter of the book, [The Foundations Under Attack: The Roots of Apostasy – By Michael de Semylen](#)

This article talks about the differences between Calvinism and Arminianism. I personally don't understand why theologians want to debate doctrines like this. Neither John Calvin nor James Arminius taught me the Gospel of Christ. I want to get my doctrines straight from the Word of God, from the Bible, and not say I'm a follower of either Calvin or Arminius. We're supposed to be followers of Jesus Christ!

The phrase "believe on" appears 15 times in 14 verses in the New Testament, and two of those verses are commands!

*Acts 16:31 And they said, **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

*1 John 3:23 And this is **his commandment**, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.*

Aren't our beliefs subject to our will? Obeying a command or not is certainly subject to our will. Calvinism says our salvation is *not subject* to our will. Does that mean our belief in Jesus is also not subject to our will? Arminianism says it's subject to our will. Both Calvinists and Arminians call each other's belief heresy. All I know is the Bible commands us to believe on Jesus and I obeyed.

I may be wrong but I don't see any reason to debate which is correct and which is not. That's just my opinion. However because this chapter is part of the book I am posting on this website, I am including it. It is an interesting read to learn the history behind these two doctrines. But as I say, I can't go by what theologians tell me the Bible says, I can only go by what I know the Bible says. It tells me in Titus 3:5:

*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*

What does that mean? Exactly what it says. According to Scripture our salvation therefore is not man-centered, but Christ centered.

## PART III ARMINIANISM: A MAN-CENTERED GOSPEL

### Chapter 11

## The Origins of Arminianism

James (Jacob) Arminius (1560-1609) was a Dutch theologian who studied and taught the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that had been rediscovered and proclaimed by the Reformation. Subsequently he changed his position and began to preach and teach a man-centered gospel. Calvin, Luther, Cranmer, Latimer, Zwingli, and Knox, among many other great preachers, taught the centrality of the grace of God and His gift of faith alone, for salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. This Christ-centered gospel was, and is *"the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."* (Romans 1:16) In this section we set out to study the man-centered gospel that has become standard in many parts of what is still called "Evangelicalism." This man-centered message sees the receiving of the Gospel as deriving from a person's own faith. It assumes wrongly that salvation originates with the will of man by his choice or decision and it is finally to be positioned in the human heart. The Scriptures make clear that salvation originates with God, not to be within the human heart but to be "in Christ." For example, the Apostle Paul states in his own testimony *"...that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."* (Philippians 3:8-9) How then did this man-centered salvation come into the Christian church? As we shall seek to show there has been a great falling away from the truths that were proclaimed at the time of the Reformation. (This is fully documented in *Evangelicalism Divided* by Iain Murray (Banner of Truth Trust, 2000).) Many modern evangelicals, in sharing their gospel, publicly offer "invitations" such as, "Accept Jesus into your heart", "Invite Jesus into your life", or "Make a decision for Christ." Like Roman Catholicism, such a gospel looks for salvation in the human heart, and is thought to be brought about by man's own choice.

The author asks for the reader's patience in studying this third section of the book, in order to carefully take note of the record of history, the witness of Scripture and the testimony of post-Reformation servants of Christ who have warned of "another gospel" and "another spirit." (2 Corinthians 11:4) All that follows has been documented in order to demonstrate that much of what has come to be accepted as Christianity is misconceived. Totally missing in the modern man-centered message is the defining Biblical truth spelled out by the Apostle Paul, *"There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God."* (Romans 3:10-11) In fact the Apostle makes clear to the would-be convert that there is absolutely nothing we have to offer to contribute to our salvation. God makes alive those *"who were dead in trespasses and sins."* (Ephesians 2:1) We shall show from the record of history that this man-centered Christianity has become what is now the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council has taught that man is simply incapacitated or wounded by sin, and he can decide his own destiny in the sight of God.

". . . Nevertheless man has been **wounded by sin**. He finds by experience that his body is in revolt. His very dignity therefore requires that he should glorify God in his body, and not allow it to serve the evil inclinations of

his heart. When he is drawn to think about his real self he turns to those deep recesses of his being where God who probes the heart awaits him, and **where he himself decides his own destiny** in the sight of God.” (Vatican II Documents No. 64, *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 Dec 1965 in *Documents of Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin P. Flannery, Ed. New Revised Edition, 2 Vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975, 1984) Vol. I, Sec. 14, p. 915)

Arminianism among evangelicals has been described as a halfway house to Roman Catholicism and has been responsible for much of the growth of the Ecumenical Movement. Man-centered “free-will” Christianity and Roman Catholicism are equally wedded to a wrong message. To understand this more fully we need the historical explanation of just how this whole system of thought arose. In this section we will use the eponymous term Arminianism to refer to that system which upholds a man-centered message.

### **An Historic Heresy**

Dr. Lorraine Boettner, American author of two important books, [\*Roman Catholicism\*](#) and *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, has given us an helpful observation to begin examining this difficult subject.

“. .Arminianism existed for centuries only as a heresy on the outskirts of true religion, and in fact it was not championed by an organized Christian church until the year 1784, at which time it was incorporated into the system of doctrine of the Methodist Church in England [by John Wesley].” Lorraine Boettner: *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*

We have shown [earlier in this book](#) how in the sixteenth century Jesuit scholars were commissioned to undermine the *Received Text* and to re-interpret Bible prophecy in order to vindicate the Papacy from its widely held identification as the Antichrist.

However, shielding the Church of Rome from the sword of the Spirit would not be enough. The Reformation’s newly rediscovered doctrines of grace, underlining the sovereignty of God and underpinning the eternal security of the believer, altogether at odds with the pretensions of the Pope, would need to be challenged and overturned. The Jesuits were commissioned to infiltrate the church and its institutions of learning.

The Pope’s secret army of infiltrators was prophesied in the Scriptures, “...false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:” (Galatians 2:4) The Apostle Peter also described them and what they would do.

*“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.” – 2 Peter 2:1-2*

In his book *Arminianism: The Road Back to Rome*, Augustus Toplady, preacher, scholar, theologian, and hymn-writer ("Rock of Ages" and "A Debtor to Mercy Alone"), wrote that "as Arminianism came from Rome, so it leads thither again." Also, he added the following:

"...the Jesuits were moulded into a regular body, towards the middle of the sixteenth century; towards the close of the same century, Arminius began to infect the Protestant churches. It needs therefore no great penetration to discern from what source he drew his poison. His journey to Rome...was not for nothing. If, however, any are disposed to believe that Arminius imbibed his doctrines from the Socinians in Poland, with whom, it is certain, he was on terms of intimate friendship. I have no objection to splitting the difference; he might import some of his tenets from the Racovian brethren, and yet be indebted, for others, to the disciples of Loyola."

In England, in the seventeenth century, during the Arminian regime of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1633 to 1645 and a persecutor of both Puritans and Covenanters, zealous Arminians were promoted to the best bishoprics. A famous letter written by a Jesuit to the Rector of Brussels and endorsed by Laud himself was found in the Archbishop's own study at Lambeth. A copy of this same letter was also found among the papers of a society of priests and Jesuits at Clerkenwell in 1627. The following is an extract from this notorious letter:

"We have now many strings to our bow. We have planted *the sovereign drug Arminianism* which we hope will purge the Protestants from their heresy; and it flourisheth and beareth fruit in due season. I am at this time transported with joy to see how happily all instruments and means, as well great as smaller, co- operate with our purposes. But to return to the main fabric; OUR FOUNDATION IS ARMINIANISM."

In his book *Justification by Faith Alone* Dr. Joel Beeke, Professor of Systematic Theology at the Puritan Reformed Seminary at Grand Rapids, exposing the error at the heart of the *free will* system, stated:

"Arminianism errs in making part of the foundation of justification to rest on faith. By advocating **conditional predestination** and **conditional faith** in justification (God elects and saves those who believe), Arminianism is a cruel hoax. John Owen, the great Puritan divine, ridicules the Arminian condition of salvation by faith as an impossibility, saying it is 'as if a man should promise a blind man a thousand pounds upon condition that he will see.' Owen views the Christ of the Arminian as 'but a half- mediator' because He procures the end of salvation but not the means of it. Charles Spurgeon is more graphic. He likens Arminianism and Calvinism to two bridges. The Arminian bridge is wide and easy but does not bring its traveler safely to the opposite shore of the river. It stops short of eternal communion with God because something is left for the depraved will of the natural man to accomplish— exercising faith in Christ. The Calvinist bridge is narrow but spans the entire river, for Christ Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega for salvation and justification. Arminianism looks promising, but it cannot live up to its promises because it depends upon depraved humanity to act. In doing so, it deceives myriads of souls who think that they accept Christ by a

simple act of their own will but do not bow under Christ's lordship. They imagine they have saving faith while their lives evidence that they remain spiritually dead. Calvinism is promising, for it places the entire weight of justification and salvation on the sufficiency of Christ and the operation of His Spirit who bestows and sustains saving faith.

"In the final analysis, if we base our justification on human faith, works, or anything else, the very foundations of justification crumble. For inevitably, the agonizing, perplexing, and hopeless questions of having enough of anything would surface: Is my faith strong enough? Are the fruits of grace in my life enough? Are my experiences deep enough, clear enough, persistent enough? Every inadequacy in my faith will shake the very foundations of my spiritual life. My best believing is always defective. I am too ungodly, even in my faith. Apart from Christ, the best of my best is 'as filthy rags.' (Isaiah 64:6).

"Too many Christians despair because they cannot distinguish between the rock on which they stand and the faith by which they stand upon it. Faith is not our rock; Christ is our rock. We do not get faith by having faith in our faith or by looking to faith, but by looking to Christ. Looking to Christ is faith." ( 15 Joel Beeke, *Justification by Faith* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books))

### **The Founder of Arminianism, Its Articles, and the Synod of Dort**

James Arminius (1560-1609) is generally regarded as the founder of the system of Arminianism. He was educated at the new Dutch University at Leyden and then at Geneva under the tutelage of Theodore Beza, Calvin's well respected follower and successor. Around 1591, after only a year at the Geneva Academy, he began to develop views that were to become diametrically opposed to the doctrines of free and sovereign grace that were taught at Geneva. He departed and continued his education elsewhere. He became a minister in Amsterdam and was later invited to become Professor of Divinity at the University of Leyden. It was from this point that he began propounding his theories with (guarded) vigour.



James (Jacob) Arminius

As the doctrines of *free grace* were in the ascendancy at the time, his teachings on *free will* were bound to arouse controversy and bring him into conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities. This was a dangerous activity, as heresy could be a capital offence. Perhaps because of this Arminius was difficult to pin down. His teachings could be very ambiguous and sophisticated. In 1605, for example, the Synod set nine simple questions for Arminius to answer in an attempt to clarify his position. He responded with nine opposite questions and employed scholarly and philosophical devices to avoid giving simple, straight answers. The first question was, "Which is first, Election, or Faith Truly Foreseen, so that God elected his people according to faith foreseen?" Arminius did not—perhaps dared not—give a straight answer. And so the controversy rumbled on even until after his death in 1609.

Eventually his followers, known as the *Remonstrants*, petitioned the Government of Holland with a five-point *Remonstrance*, which was a development of the core teachings of Arminius. It was systematised and published in January 1610 by Jan Uytenbogaert and Simon Episcopius, both former students of Arminius. They led forty-three fellow ministers in introducing their document *The Arminian Articles of Remonstrance* to the ecclesiastical authorities. Their objective was to bring about the convening of a synod, which would overthrow the Doctrines of Grace, which had been freely preached since the Reformation, and make the teachings of Arminius the official doctrine of the Reformed Churches in all of Europe. They were successful in the first part of their endeavour; a General Synod at Dordrecht (Dort) was called in 1618, and representatives attended it from all of the Reformed Churches in Europe, including those from England. The following is a summary

of the five Remonstrance articles:

- **Free Will or Human Ability** – Arminius believed that the fall of man was not total, maintaining that there is enough virtue in man to enable him to choose to accept Jesus Christ unto salvation.
- **Conditional Election** – Arminius taught that election is based on the foreknowledge of God as to who would believe. Man's "act of faith" is the "condition" governing his being elected to eternal life, since God foresaw him exercising his "free will" in response to Jesus Christ.
- **Universal Atonement** – Arminius held that Christ died to save all men, but only in a potential fashion. Christ's death enabled God to pardon sinners, but only on condition that they believed.
- **Resistible Grace** – Arminius believed that since God wants all men to be saved, He sends the Holy Spirit to draw all men to Christ. But since man has absolute "free will", he is able to resist God's will for his life. Therefore God's will to save all men can be frustrated by the finite will of man. Arminius also taught that man exercises his own will first, and then is born again.
- **Falling from Grace** – If man cannot be saved by God unless it is man's will to be saved, then man cannot continue in salvation unless he continues to will to be saved.

In order to deal with these five articles of Arminianism, a conference was convened in 1618, which became known as the *Synod of Dort*. It was no convention of novices or of weaklings that met at Dort in 1618. Rev. J.A. McLeod, Principal of the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh, described the Synod thus.

"They had among their leaders and counselors some of the foremost divines of their day. And the conclusions at which they arrived in the avowal of their faith and in the condemnation of error were not hastily come to. They were the ripe decisions of a generation of theologians who were at home in their subject, expert in wielding their weapons and temperate and restrained in the terms in which they set forth their judgment. Coming as they did in point of time after the National Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformed Churches... . . except the documents of the Westminster Assembly, they with these documents of British origin are the culminating exhibition of our common Reformed Faith, when it was called upon to unfold its inmost genius and essence in self- defence against the revived Semi-Pelagianism of the early Arminians."

These great theologians of the day sat for one hundred and fifty four sessions over a period of seven months, assessing the teachings of Arminius in the light of Scripture and concluding that they could find no Biblical basis for his propositions. The Synod finally determined there was no reason to overturn the teaching of the Reformation. It reaffirmed the position that Arminius opposed. The *Articles of Dort* declared that God is entirely sovereign in salvation, "...*Salvation is of the LORD*" (Jonah 2:9), and formulated five statements rebutting Arminian theology. In time these statements became known as The Five Points of Calvinism.

"That Christ, which natural free-will can apprehend, is but a natural Christ of a man's own making, not the Father's Christ, nor Jesus the Son of the living God, to whom none can come without the Father's drawing, John 6:44."

*"...and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Acts 13:48*

Thus, the teachings of Arminius and his cadre were unanimously rejected by the venerable divines assembled at the Synod of Dort. They were declared to be heresy. The positive response of the Assembly was the reaffirmation of the *Doctrines of Grace* as taught at the Reformation.

In order to refute the five points asserted by the Arminians, the Synod issued four *canons*, which were subsequently revised to five. These canons have come down to us today as the *Five Points of Calvinism* and are often remembered as "TULIP", an acronym that was devised to summarise the Canons of Dort in response to the heretical five-point scheme of the Arminian *Remonstrance*.

- **Total Depravity** – This refers to the total inability of man to change his fallen state, 'dead in trespasses and sins' (See Ephesians 2:1,5; Colossians 2:13; Psalms 80:18) Because man is utterly dead, spiritually, he has not the capacity to do good or to exercise faith. Moreover, he does not have free will as it is "...in bondage under the elements of the world:" (Galatians 4:3; See also Romans 5:12; 2 Timothy 2:25)
- **Unconditional Election** – "Those of mankind who are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving Him thereunto."
- **Limited Atonement or Particular Redemption** – Christ died only for His sheep, for His church, for those numbered in the Elect, by name, from all Eternity. (See Ephesians 5:25; John 10:11)
- **Irresistible Grace** – Calvinists believe that the Lord possesses grace that cannot be resisted. The free will of man is so far removed from salvation that the elect are regenerated or made spiritually alive by God even before expressing faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. If God hath purposed from all Eternity to save His Elect, it follows that He must also provide the means for calling them into so glorious a Salvation. *"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."* (John 6:37; See also John 6:44-45; Psalms 110:3; Galatians 1:15; 1 Peter 2:9, 5:10; Romans 8:20; Acts 16:14; Mark 3:13; Psalms 100:3; Psalms 65:4; Isaiah 27:12)
- **Perseverance of the Saints** – The 1689 Baptist Confession again closely agrees with Dort. "Those whom God hath accepted in the beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, and given the precious faith of His Elect unto, can neither totally nor finally fall from that state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved, seeing the gifts and calling of God are without repentance..." (See Romans 8:27-30; Philippians 1:6; John 6:39, 10:28; Romans 5:10,8:1;etc.)

## **Pelagius and Semi-Pelagianism—the Forerunner of Arminianism**

There is nothing new under the sun. “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.” – Ecclesiastes 1:9 Essentially the Arminian controversy has been a re-run of a similar controversy which, more than a thousand years earlier, was waged between the British monk Pelagius and Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, as the early Church sought to formulate its theology.

Pelagius arrived in Rome at the dawn of the fifth century and spent most of his life in that city, studying, writing and teaching theology. He began asserting the self-governing ability of man before God. He denied original sin and the depraved state of mankind as well as the absolute requirement of God’s Sovereign Grace in the salvation of His saints. Pelagius was condemned as a heretic by the Roman Church and the modified form of his heresy, semi-Pelagianism, was also condemned at the Council of Orange in 529. Semi-Pelagianism, the fore-runner of Arminianism, essentially teaches that humanity is tainted by sin, but not to the extent that we cannot cooperate with God’s grace on our own—in essence, partial depravity as opposed to total depravity.

However, the same Scriptures that refute Pelagianism also refute semi-Pelagianism. Romans 3:10-18 most definitely does not describe humanity as only being partially tainted by sin. (Romans 3:10-18) The Bible clearly teaches that without God drawing a person, we are incapable of cooperating with God’s grace. “*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him...*” (John 6:44) Nevertheless the semi-Pelagian view of man’s ability to cooperate and to possess inherent or conferred righteousness is widely prevalent today.

As R.C. Sproul writes, “...the basic assumptions of this view persisted throughout church history to reappear in Medieval Catholicism, Renaissance Humanism, Socinianism, Arminianism, and modern Liberalism. The seminal thought of Pelagius survives today, not as a trace of tangential influence, but is pervasive in the modern church. Indeed the modern church is held captive by it.”

## **Pelagius, Augustine, and Luther’s *The Bondage of the Will***

In AD 411, with the onset of Alaric’s second raid on Rome, Pelagius fled the city with his pupil Coelestius, finding a safe haven in North Africa. In the purposes of God this brought him into the orbit of Augustine, although Pelagius soon moved on to Palestine. He left his protégé Coelestius behind at Carthage, but both men continued to promote the heresy of the autonomy of man and his free will over against the free grace and the Sovereignty of God. Pelagius was shocked by the prayer in Augustine’s Confessions, “Grant what thou dost command, and command what thou wilt,” which seemed to remove from man all freedom, and therefore all responsibility. Pelagius certainly thought that man needs God’s grace, but by grace he meant man’s power to choose the good, and God’s revelation of that good in the Law, the Prophets, and, above all, in Christ. Each soul, he taught, comes into being in the same condition

as Adam. There is no inherited guilt, no sin inherited from Adam by virtue of the Fall. The confrontation between Augustine and Pelagius about the will of man in his fallen condition was re-echoed eleven hundred years later in Erasmus' semi-Pelagian Diatribe and Luther's answer in *The Bondage of the Will*. The able reformer, like Augustine, knew from Scripture that sinful man has a will, but his will is enslaved and bent towards evil, and can do no good thing. For until man is converted and is renewed by the Holy Spirit, his will is captive to Satan and is "*taken captive by him at his [Satan's] will.*" (2 Timothy 2:26)

The publisher's comments on *The Bondage of the Will* state that,

*"The Bondage of the Will* is fundamental to an understanding of the primary doctrines of the Reformation. In these pages, Luther gives extensive treatment to what he saw as the heart of the gospel."

J.I. Packer and O.R. Johnston add to this in the "Historical and Theological Introduction" to *The Bondage of the Will* by stating,

*"The Bondage of the Will* is the greatest piece of writing that came from Luther's pen.

"In.... . its vigour of language, its profound theological grasp, .... . and the grand sweep of its exposition, it stands unsurpassed among Luther's writings.

"Free will' was no academic question to Luther; the whole gospel of the grace of God, he held, was bound up with it, and stood or fell according to the way one decided it.

"In particular, the denial of 'free-will' was to Luther the foundation of the Biblical doctrine of grace, and a hearty endorsement of that denial was the first step for anyone who would understand the gospel and come to faith in God. The man who has not yet practically and experimentally learned the bondage of his will in sin has not yet comprehended any part of the gospel;

"Justification by faith only' is a truth that needs interpretation. The principle of *sola fide* [by faith alone] is not rightly understood till it is seen as anchored in the broader principle of *sola gratia* [by grace alone] .... for to rely on oneself for faith is no different in principle from relying on oneself for works,.

Yet another comment on this work of Luther's offers that, "Luther here refutes the Romish notion of 'free will' in man and upholds the absolute sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners

– as well as justification by faith alone. Luther clearly saw the issue of free will as the primary cause of his separation from Rome."

The Bible teaches that faith itself is, and has to be, a gift of God, by grace, and not of self.

Though the will is never forced, nor destined by any necessity of nature to perform evil, yet sinful man has lost all ability of will to perform any of the spiritual good which accompanies salvation. He is not able, by an act of

the will, to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not willing to be converted. Unless the Lord intervenes, man remains bound, for “...*men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*” (John 3:19) A corrupt tree bears corrupt fruit. That is all it can do. The natural man is not able by his own strength to turn to God, or even dispose himself towards God, for “*No man can come unto me, except the Father which have sent me draw him:...*” (John 6:44) He is “...*dead in trespasses and sins;*” (Ephesians 2:1) He is at “*enmity against God.*” (Romans 8:7) Grace or unmerited favour is essential, for man does not seek God. It is God who seeks him. It is instructive to note that all the sixteenth century Reformers were originally Augustinians, that is, they believed in the total depravity of man's nature and the absolute sovereignty of God's grace.

Pelagius denied all of this and instead asserted the full ability and potential of the human will. He taught that man can eliminate sin from his life by the exercise of his will and can keep the commandments of God if he really wants to. He arrived at this conclusion by twisted logic that concluded, “God would not command man to do what cannot be done by man.” Thus Pelagius, in considering the will, ignored, or rather played down, the consequence of Adam's fall. The Scriptures show us that man was created able, but lost his ability through his apostasy. But Pelagius insisted that no obligation could ever be placed outside man's limitless capacity for good. He established the definitive Pelagian view that if God commands anything we must be able to obey. God has no right to command if we are unable to obey!

In July AD 415, at the Synod of Jerusalem, Pelagius was condemned *in absentia*. In December of the same year, at the Synod of Lydda (Diospolis), he appeared, but managed to escape condemnation by what B.B.Warfield has described as follows:

“... only by a course of the most ingenious disingenuousness... and of leading the Synod to believe that he was anathematizing the very doctrines that he himself was proclaiming. ... Pelagius obtained his acquittal by a lying condemnation or a tricky interpretation of his own teachings. In the words of Augustine, ‘Heresy was not acquitted, but the man who denied the heresy’, 42 and he would have himself been anathematized if he had not anathematized the heresy.”

As with Arminius, in Pelagius we see a man purporting to contend for truth who brims with equivocation. He exploited his escape from condemnation to the maximum, falsely claiming an endorsement for his heresies. But he was soon to be undone.

A two-pronged attack by Augustine and Jerome –a powerful combination–led to Pelagius's condemnation by two African councils in 416, a decision upheld by Pope Innocent I, who in 417 excommunicated Pelagius and Celestius. Though Innocent's successor, Zosimus, at first overturned this verdict and action, he was shaken by such a storm from the African bishops that he not only changed his mind, but also wrote a letter requiring Western bishops to endorse the condemnation. On May 1, 418, the teachings of Pelagius were declared to be anathema. His supporters deserted him in droves to save their own skins, although his heretical teachings on free will continued

"underground." After this nothing more is heard of Pelagius. One source has him dead by 420, another report says he lived for at least another twenty years. Despite his formal discrediting, his teachings kept resurfacing for more than a century, until they were firmly repudiated at the Council of Orange in 529.

The Conclusion to the Canons of the Council of Orange begins with a clear and comprehensive statement that states,

"And thus according to the passages of holy scripture quoted above or the interpretations of the ancient Fathers we must, under the blessing of God, preach and believe as follows. The sin of the first man has so impaired and weakened free will that no one thereafter can either love God as he ought or believe in God or do good for God's sake, unless the grace of divine mercy has preceded him. We therefore believe that the glorious faith which was given to Abel the righteous, and Noah, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and to all the saints of old, and which the Apostle Paul commends in extolling them (Heb. 11), was not given through natural goodness as it was before to Adam, but was bestowed by the the grace of God. And we know and also believe that even after the coming of our Lord this grace is not to be found in the free will of all who desire to be baptized, but is bestowed by the kindness of Christ, as has already been frequently stated and as the Apostle Paul declares, *'For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.'* (Phil. 1:29) And again, *'He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.'* (Phil. 1:6). And again, *'For by grace you have been saved through faith; and it is not your own doing, it is the gift of God.'* (Eph. 2:8). And as the Apostle says of himself, *'I have obtained mercy to be faithful.'* (1 Cor. 7:25, cf. 1 Tim. 1:13). He did not say, 'because I was faithful', but 'to be faithful.' And again, 'What have you that you did not receive?' (1 Cor. 4:7). And again, *'Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights'* (Jas. 1:17). And again, *'No one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven.'* (John 3:27). There are innumerable passages of holy scripture which can be quoted to prove the case for grace, but they have been omitted for the sake of brevity, because further examples will not really be of use where few are deemed sufficient."

Truth is ever hammered out on the anvil of error, and in the purposes of God, this controversy was the vehicle used to define the doctrines of Free and Sovereign Grace. Cometh the hour, cometh the man, and the servant of God in this watershed in the development of Christian Theology was Augustine of Hippo. For more than a millennium his teachings on the Sovereignty of God and His gift of Free Grace were held dear by true believers until the controversy was revived by Arminius and his followers in the seventeenth century. Like all of Adam's fallen race, the regenerate Augustine was most certainly prone to error. But at the same time the Lord endowed him with an insight into the workings of His Sovereign Grace that has not been surpassed. Augustine's influence was enormous. B.B.

Warfield described the Reformation as "the triumph of Augustine's doctrine of grace over his doctrine of the Church." R.C. Sproul has written that "the

Reformation witnessed the ultimate triumph of Augustine's doctrines of grace over the legacy of the Pelagian view of man." It was Augustine who was the bulwark chosen by God to stem the tide of error, which has ebbed and flowed over the centuries through the teachings of Pelagius.

Augustine was the first of the "Church Fathers" to codify the Doctrines of Grace and to confront and refute the impostures of human *free will* in salvation. His recorded preaching and writings against Pelagius are so voluminous that we cannot begin to explore them here. It suffices to say that his wisdom was acknowledged even by Arminius and that he was the man principally responsible under God for the fact that the false teachings of Pelagius are widely recognised as such today.

What is mystifying, humanly speaking, is that, notwithstanding the above, the heresy of free will in salvation has repeatedly resurfaced, albeit in modified guises, and that the doctrines of Free and Sovereign Grace have been assailed at diverse times despite Augustine's masterful expositions of these cardinal doctrines and his systematising of them into a whole Body of Divinity.

(To be continued.)

## **All chapters of The Foundations Under Attack: The Roots of Apostasy**

- [The Foundations Under Attack: The Roots of Apostasy – By Michael de Semylen](#)
- [The Historical View of Prophecy and Antichrist](#)
- [Futurism – Leapfrogging History – The Wiles of the Devil](#)
- [The Counter-Reformation – The Source of the Futurist View of Prophecy](#)
- [Futurism Devised across the Centuries by the Jesuits](#)
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- [The Modern Versions – Origins and Influences](#)
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## **[Futurism Devised across the Centuries by the Jesuits](#)**



The Futurist interpretation of prophecy was originally propounded by the Spanish Jesuit scholar Francisco Ribera and was developed by Jesuit Bellarmine.

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## [The Antichrist Is Hidden In Plain Sight](#)

According to the Bible, which of the below is the Antichrist likely to look like?



Without exception all the leaders of the Protestant Reformation looked at the Popes of Rome as the man of sin who sits as God in the temple of God – the Church – shewing himself that he is God.

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## [Early Protestant leaders told us who the Biblical Antichrist is!](#)

According to the Bible, which of the below is the Antichrist likely to look like?



Many Christians know a bit of the history of the Protestant Reformation that began with Martin Luther in 1517. But how many know about the Roman Catholic reaction to the Protestant Reformation, also known as the “Counter-Reformation”? How many Christians have even *heard* of the Counter-Reformation? Not many! And why? It’s because the leadership of the Counter-Reformation have done a bang-up job of undermining Protestant churches and seminaries with false interpretations of Daniel, Matthew 24 and the Book of Revelation to the point they do not know anymore who the Biblical Antichrist is!

### **What early Protestant leaders taught about the Antichrist:**

#### **Martin Luther**

“We here are of the conviction that the **papacy is the seat of the seed of the true and real antichrist**. I owe the Pope no other obedience than that I owe to antichrist.”

“I am persuaded that if at this time St. Peter in person should preach all the articles of Holy Scripture and only deny the Pope’s authority, power and primacy and say that the Pope is not the head of all Christendom, they would cause him to be hanged.”

“The *Pope is the very antichrist* who is exalted himself above and opposed himself against Christ because he will not permit Christians to be saved.”

“It is nothing else than the devil himself, because above and against God he urges and disseminates his papal falsehoods concerning Masses, Purgatory, monastic life, one’s own works, fictitious divine worship, which is the very papacy, and condemns, murders and tortures all Christians who don’t exalt and honor these

abominations of the Pope above all things. Therefore just as little as we can worship the devil himself as Lord and God we can endure his apostle the Pope. For to lie and to kill and destroy a body and soul eternally, that is wherein his papal government really consists."

**John Calvin** 1509-1564

"Some persons think us too severe and censorious when **we call the Roman Pontiff antichrist**, but those who are of this opinion do not consider that they bring the same charge of presumption against Paul himself after whom we speak and whose language we adopt. I shall briefly show that Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 2 are not capable to any other interpretation than that which applies them to the papacy."

**Thomas Cranmer** (2 July 1489 – 21 March 1556) was a leader of the English Reformation and Archbishop of Canterbury during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and, for a short time, Mary I.

"Whereof it follows Rome to be the seat of antichrist and the Pope to be the very antichrist himself, I could prove the same by many scriptures."

**Cotton Mather** An American Puritan who died in 1728

"The oracles of God foretold **the rising of an Antichrist in the Christian Church: and in the Pope of Rome**, all the characteristics of that Antichrist are so marvelously answered that **if any who read the Scriptures do not see it, there is a marvelous blindness upon them.**"

**Charles Spurgeon**

"It is the bound and duty of every Christian to pray against this Antichrist, and as to what Antichrist is, no sane man ought to raise a question. If it be not the popery in the Church of Rome there is nothing in the world that can be called by that name."



"Popery is contrary to Christ's gospel and is the antichrist and we ought to pray against it. It should be the daily prayer of every believer that the antichrist might be hurled like a millstone into

the flood and for Christ, because it wounds Christ, because it robs Christ of his glory, because it puts sacramental efficacy in the place of his atonement and lifts a piece of bread into the place of the Savior and a few drops of water into the place of the Holy Spirit. And puts a mere fallible man like ourselves up as the Vicar of Christ on Earth. IF we pray against it, because it is against him, we shall love the persons though we hate their errors. We shall love their souls though we loathe and detest their dogmas. And so the breath of our prayers will be sweetened because we turn our faces toward Christ when we pray."

"Of all the dreams that have ever deluded men, and probably of all blasphemies that ever were uttered, there has never been one which is more absurd and which is more fruitful in all manner of mischief than the idea that the bishop of Rome can be the head of the church of Jesus Christ."

"A man who deludes other people by degrees comes to delude himself. The deluder first makes dupes out of others and then becomes a dupe to himself. I should not wonder but what the Pope really believes that he is infallible and that he ought to be saluted as "His Holiness." It must have taken him a good time to arrive at that eminence of self deception. But he's got to, I daresay, by now and everyone who kisses his toe confirms him in this insane idea. When everybody else believes a flattering falsehood concerning you, you come, at last, to believe it yourself or at least to think it may be so."

"Christ did not redeem his church with his blood so the Pope would come in and steal away the glory. He never came from heaven to earth. He never poured out his very heart that he might purchase his people. That a poor sinner, a mere man, should be set upon high to be admired by all the nations and to call himself God's representative on earth, Christ has always been the head of his church."

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## [Charles Spurgeon's views on the Pope](#)



Charles Haddon (CH) Spurgeon (/ˈhædən ˈspɜːrdʒən/; 19 June 1834 – 31 January 1892) was a British Particular Baptist preacher. Spurgeon remains highly influential among Christians of various denominations, among whom he is known as the “Prince of Preachers”. He was a strong figure in the Reformed Baptist tradition, defending the Church in agreement with the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith understanding, and opposing the liberal and pragmatic theological tendencies in the Church of his day.(Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles\\_Spurgeon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Spurgeon) )

“Popery is contrary to Christ’s Gospel, and is the Antichrist, and we ought to pray against it. It should be the daily prayer of every believer that Antichrist might be hurled like a millstone into the flood and for Christ, because it wounds Christ, because it robs Christ of His glory, because it puts sacramental efficacy in the place of His atonement, and lifts a piece of bread into the place of the Saviour, and a few drops of water into the place of the Holy Ghost, and puts a mere fallible man like ourselves up as the vicar of Christ on earth; if we pray against it, because it is against Him, we shall love the persons though we hate their errors: we shall love their souls though we loath and detest their dogmas, and so the breath of our prayers will be sweetened, because we turn our faces towards Christ when we pray.”

“It is the bounden duty of every Christian to pray against Antichrist, and as to what Antichrist is no sane man ought to raise a question. If it be not the popery in the Church of Rome there is nothing in the world that can be called by that name. If there were to be issued a hue and cry for Antichrist, we should certainly take up this church on suspicion, and it would certainly not be let loose again, for it so exactly answers the description.”

“Her idolatries are the scorn of reason and the abhorrence of

faith! The iniquities of her practice and the enormities of her doctrine almost surpass belief! Popery is as much the masterpiece of Satan as the Gospel is the masterpiece of God! There can scarcely be imagined anything of devilish craftiness or Satanic wickedness which could be compared with her—she is unparalleled as the queen of iniquity.”

“Behold upon her forehead the name, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. The Church of Rome and her teachings are a vast mountain of rubbish covering the Truth of God! For weary years good men could not get at the Foundation because of this very much rubbish.”

This article is inspired from a Facebook post by my friend David Nikao.