

Calvinism and Arminianism The Basic Differences... and Why It Matters

INTRODUCTION



The Basic Issue in Life. John Calvin (1509-64).

- Reformed theology.
- The influence of Augustine of Hippo.
- A brilliant and controversial theologian.

Calvin's Critics.

- Jerome Bolsec (d. 1585).
 - ► The issue of double predestination.

Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609).

- A Protestant pastor, Bible scholar and theologian at the University of Leiden.
- An assessment of Dirck Coornhert's theology (1589).
 - ► Predestination, supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism.
- Arminius's acceptance of free will.
- Accusations of Pelagianism.
- Debate with Franciscus Gomarus (1608).

The Calvinist/Arminian Controversy.

- Arminius's efforts to "reform" Reformation theology.
- Controversial doctrines: unconditional election, limited atonement, and irresistible grace.
- Arminian "preventing" (prevenient) grace.
- The Arminian Remonstrance of 1610: A 5-point critique of Calvinism.
- The Council of Dort (1618) and "Five Articles Against the Remonstrants."
- "Five-Point Calvinism" (TULIP).
 The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647).

Calvinism and Arminianism: Similarities and Differences.

- Both theologies teach salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone.
- Both theologies acknowledge divine sovereignty.
- Both theologies acknowledge humanity's sin nature.
- The question: How are justification, redemption, reconciliation, and sanctification effected?
- Calvinism is monergistic.
- Arminianism is synergistic.

Augustinian and Pelagian Theology.

- **Augustine of Hippo** (354-430).
 - ► Monergistic divine sovereignty.
 - ► The doctrine of original (inherited) sin.
 - The Fall destroyed mankind's free will, and sin created a bondage of the will.
 - The noetic effects of the Fall: humanity as "a mass of damnation."
 - Only divine grace can break mankind's bondage to sin.
 - ► Divine grace is irresistible.
 - ► Augustinian predestination (i.e., predeterminism).
 - Ref. Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:3-5, 11.
 - Predestination applies to both justification and sanctification.
 - God alone, through his sovereign will, determines who is to be saved.
 - Double predestination.
 - ► Perseverance of the saints.
- **Pelagius** (c. 354-418).
 - Synergistic free will.
 - ► Pelagius denied original sin and believed Christians could choose to live in perfect obedience to God.
 - A critic of "cheap grace."
 - ► Salvation comes through free will by choosing to live a righteous life.
 - ► Predestination is based on divine foreknowledge and applies to the sanctification process.
 - ► Pelagian perfectionism was based on Matt. 5:48.
 - God's grace provides the illumination, the motivation, and the power to overcome sin.
 - ► A critic of infant baptism.
 - God (through the Holy Spirit) initiates our salvation.
 - Encounters with Augustine of Hippo.
 - ► Caelestius.
 - ► Heresy hearings and excommunication.

▶ What exactly did Pelagius believe and teach?