

# REFORMATION HISTORY NOTES

## Arminianism: The Road to Rome!

by Augustus Toplady

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# REFORMATION HISTORY NOTES

## Arminianism: The Road to Rome!

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*"...that there is no such a thing as preaching Christ and him crucified unless you preach what is now-a-days called Calvinism. I have my own ideas, and those I state boldly. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else"* (C. H. Spurgeon, The New Park Street Pulpit, Vol. 1, 1856).

*"... and I will go as far as Martin Luther, in that strong assertion of his, where he says, 'If any man doth ascribe of salvation, even the very least, to the free will of man, he knoweth nothing of grace, and he hath not learnt Jesus Christ aright.' It may seem a harsh sentiment; but he who in his soul believes that man does of his own free will turn to God, cannot have been taught of God, for that is one of the first principles taught us when God begins with us, that we have neither will nor power, but that He gives both; that He is 'Alpha and Omega' in the salvation of men."* (Charles H. Spurgeon from the sermon "Free Will A Slave" (1855) referring to Luther's book *The Bondage of the Will* which is listed with their resources on this topic after this article).

*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: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God* (John 1:12-13, KJV, emphases added).

### Whose Voice Do You Hear?

"My sheep, saith Christ, hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish. O, most worthy Scriptures! which ought to compel us to have a faithful remembrance, and to note the tenor thereof; which is, the sheep of Christ shall never perish.

**"Doth Christ mean part of his elect, or all, think you?** I do hold, and affirm, and also faithfully believe, that he meant all his elect, and not part, as some do full ungodly affirm. I confess and believe assuredly, that there shall never any of them perish: for I have good authority so to say; because Christ is my author, and saith, if it were possible, the very elect should be deceived. Ergo, it is not possible that they can be so deceived, that they shall ever finally perish, or be damned; wherefore, whosoever doth affirm that there may be any (i.e. any of the elect) lost, doth affirm that Christ hath a torn body."<sup>1</sup>

The above valuable letter of recantation is thus inscribed: "A Letter to the Congregation of Free-willers, by One that had been of that Persuasion, but came off, and now a Prisoner for Religion;" which superscription will hereafter, in its due place, supply us with a remark of more than slight importance.

### John Wesley, A Friend of Rome?

To occupy the place of argument, it has been alleged that "Mr. Wesley is an old man;" and the Church of Rome is still older than he. Is that any reason why the enormities, either of the mother; or the son, should pass unchastised?

It has also been suggested, that "Mr. Wesley is a very laborious man" not more laborious, I presume, than a certain active being, who is said to go to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it: nor yet more laborious, I should imagine, than certain ancient Sectarians, concerning whom I was long ago said, "Woe unto you Scribes, hypocrites; for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte:"<sup>3</sup> nor, by any means, so usefully laborious, as a certain diligent member of the community, respecting whose variety of occupations the public have lately received the following intelligence: "The truth of the following instance of industry may be depended on: a poor man with a large family, now cries milk, every morning, in Lothbury, and the neighbourhood of the Royal Exchange; at eleven, he wheels about a barrow of potatoes; at one, he cleans shoes at the Change; after dinner, cries milk again; in the evening, sells sprats; and at night, finishes the measure of his labour as a watchman."<sup>4</sup>

### The Quarrel is With the Wolf

Mr. Sellon, moreover, reminds me (p. 128.) that, "while the shepherds are quarrelling, the wolf gets into the sheep fold;" not impossible: but it so happens, that the present quarrel is not among "the shepherds," but with the "wolf" himself; which "quarrel" is warranted by every maxim of pastoral meekness and fidelity.

I am further told, that, while I am "berating the Arminians, Rome and the devil laugh in their sleeves." Admitting that Mr. Sellon might derive this anecdote from the fountain head, the parties themselves, yet, as neither they nor he are very conspicuous for veracity, I construe the intelligence by the rule of reverse, though authenticated by the deposition of their right trusty and well-beloved cousin and counsellor.

Once more: I am charged with "excessive superciliousness, and majesty of pride;" and why not charged with having seven heads and ten horns, and a tail as long as a bell-rope? After all, what has my pride, or my humility, to do with the argument in hand? Whether I am haughty, or meek, is of no more consequence either to that, or to the public, than whether I am tall or short; however, I am, at this very time, giving one proof, that my "majesty of pride" can stoop; that even to ventilate the imperinences of Mr. Sellon.

### Arminianism at Home in Rome

But, however frivolous his cavils, the principles for which he contends are of the most pernicious nature and tendency. I must repeat, what already seems to have given him so much offence, that Arminianism "came from Rome, and leads thither again." Julian, bishop of Eclana a contemporary and disciple of Pelagius, was one of those who endeavoured, with much art, to gild the doctrines of that heresiarch, in order to render them more sightly and palatable. The Pelagian system, thus varnished and paliated, soon began to acquire the softer name of Semipelagianism. Let us take a view of it, as drawn to our hands by the celebrated Mr. Bower, who himself, in the main, a professed Pelagian, and therefore less likely to present us with an unfavourable portrait of the system he generally approved. Among the principles of that sect, this learned writer enumerates the following:

"The notion of election and reprobation, independent of our merits or demerits, is maintaining a fatal necessity, is the bane of all virtue, and serves only to render good men remiss in working out their salvation, and to drive sinners to despair.

"The decrees of election and reprobation are posterior to, and in consequence of, our good or evil works, as foreseen by God from all eternity."<sup>5</sup>

Is not this too the very language of modern Arminianism? Do not the partizans of that scheme argue on the same identical terms? **Should it be said, "True, this proves that Arminianism is Pelagianism revived; but it does not prove, that the doctrines of Arminianism are originally Popish:"** after the passage's **cool attention will make it plain that they are.** Let us again hear Mr. Bower, who, after a moment's quotation, immediately adds, "on these two last propositions, the Jesuits found their whole system of grace and free-will; agreeing therein with the Semipelagians, against the Jansenists and St. Augustine."<sup>6</sup> The Jesuits were moulded into a regular body, towards the middle of the sixteenth century: toward the close of the same century, Arminius began to foster the Protestant churches. It needs therefore no great penetration, to discern from what source he drew his poison. His journey to Rome (though Monsieur Bayle affects to make light of the inferences which were at that very time deduced from it) 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.

### Papists and Predestination

Certain it is, that Arminius himself was sensible, how greatly the doctrine of predestination widens the distance between Protestantism and Popery. "There is no point of doctrines (says he) which the Papists, the Anabaptists, and the (new) Lutherans more fiercely oppose, nor by means of which they heap more discredit on the reformed churches, and bring the reformed system itself into more odium; for they (i.e. the Papists, & etc.) assert, that no fouler blasphemy against God can be thought or expressed, than is contained in the doctrine of predestination."<sup>7</sup> **For which reason, he advises the reformed world to discard predestination from their creed, in order that they may live on more brotherly terms with the Papists, the Anabaptists, and such like.**

The Arminian writers make no scruple to seize and retail each other's arguments, as common property. Hence, Samuel Hoord copies from Van Harmin the self same observation which I have now cited. "Predestination (says Samuel) is an opinion odious to the Papists, opening their foul mouths, against our Church and religion:"<sup>8</sup> consequently, our adopting the opposite doctrines of universal grace and freewill, would, by bringing us so many degrees nearer to the Papists, conduce to shut their mouths, and make them regard us, so far at least, as their own orthodox and dearly beloved brethren: whence it follows, that, as Arminianism came from Rome, so "it leads thither again."

### The Jesuits and Predestination

If the joint verdict of Arminius himself, and of his English proselyte Hoord, will not turn the scale, **let us add the testimony of a examined Jesuit**, by way of making up full weight. When archbishop Laud's papers were examined, a letter was found among them, thus endorsed, that prelate's own hand: "March, 1628. A Jesuit's Letter, sent to the Rector at Brussels, about the ensuing Parliament." The design of this letter was to give the Superior of the Jesuits, then resident at Brussels, an account of the posture of civil and ecclesiastical affairs in England; an extract from it I shall here subjoin: "Father Rector, let not the damp of astonishment seize upon your ardent and zealous soul, in apprehending the sodaine and unexpected calling of a Parliament. We have now many strings to our bow. **We have planted that sovereignty drug Arminianism**, which we hope will purge the Protestants from their heresie; and it flouriseth and bears fruit in due season. For the better prevention of the Puritanes, the Arminians have already locked up the Duke's (of Buckingham) eares; and we have those of our owne religion, which stand continually at the Duke's chamber, to see who goes in and out: we cannot be too circumspect and careful in this regard. I am, at this time, transported with joy, to see how happily all instruments and means, as well great as lesser, co-operate unto our purposes. **But, to return unto the main fabricke--OUR FOUNDATION IS ARMINIANISME.** The Arminians and projectors, as it appears in the premises, affect mutation. This we second and enforce by probable arguments."<sup>9</sup>

### The Sovereign Drug Arminianism

The "Sovereign drug, Arminianism," which said the Jesuit, "we (i.e. we Papists) have planted" in England, did indeed bid fair to "purge our Protestant Church effectually. **How merrily Popery and Arminianism, at that time, danced hand in hand**, may be learned from Tindal: "The churches were adorned with paintings, images, altar-pieces, & etc. instead of communion tables, and were set up, and bowings to them and the sacramental elements, and injoyed. The predestinarian doctrines were forbidden, not only to be preached, but to be printed; and the Arminian sense of the Articles was encouraged and propagated."<sup>10</sup> The Jesuit, therefore, did not exult without cause. The "sovereign drug," so lately "planted," did indeed take deep root downward, and bring forth fruit upward, under the cherishing auspices of Charles and Laud. Heylyn, too, acknowledges, that the state of things was truly described by another Jesuit of that age, who wrote: "Protestantism waxeth weary of itself. The doctrine forsook the Church of Rome: as *limbus patrum*; prayer for the dead, and possibility of keeping God's commandments; and the accounting of Calvinism to be heresy at least, if not treason."<sup>11</sup>

### Arminianism From the Pit

The maintaining of these positions, by the Court divines, was an "alteration" indeed; which the abandoned Heylyn ascribes to "the ingenuity and moderation found in some professors of our religion." **If we sum up the evidence that has been given, we shall find its amount to be, that Arminianism came from the Church of Rome, and led back again to the pit whence it was digged.**

For further study: Christopher Ness, An Antidote Against Arminianism; J. Warne, Arminianism: The Back Door to Popery; John Knox, On Predestination in Works vol. 5; John Owen, A Display of Arminianism; Pink, The Sovereignty of God; Martin Luther, The Bondage of the Will; C. Van Til, The Defense of the Faith; W. MacLean, Arminianism Another Gospel; and Spurgeon's Sovereign Grace Sermons. This newsletter is an excerpt from The Complete Works of Augustus Toplady (Sprinkle Publ., [1794] 1987, pp. 54-55). Subtitles in the body of this newsletter and all emphases have been added by the editor, Reg Barrow.

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Endnotes: 1. Strype, u.s. 2. Job 1:7 with 1 Peter 5:8. 3. Matt. 23:15. 4. Bath Chronicle, for Feb. 6. 1772. 5. Bower's Hist. of the Popes, vol. 1, p. 350. 6. Bower ibid. 7. Arminius, in Oper. P.115. Lidd. 1629. (See book for Latin.) 8. Hoord, in Bishop Davenington's Animadversions, Camb. 1641. 9. Hidden works of darkness, p. 89, 90. Edit. 1645. 10. Tindal's Contin. of Rapin, vol. 3 octavo, 1758. 11. Life of Laud, p. 238.

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### PINK, A.W.

**The Sovereignty of God**  
This is the best contemporary book explaining the foundations of Calvinism. This book is like a key that, by God's grace, opens the door of understanding to some of the most blessed truths in Scripture. From the myriad of testimonies that we have heard concerning how God has used this book, we think that we can safely say that this is also the best book to pass on to those that you want to introduce to Calvinism. This is the full, unedited Baker Book House edition. Indexed.

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This is the edited Banner of Truth edition of Pink's book. It leaves out the three following chapters: "The Sovereignty of God in Reprobation," "God's Sovereignty and Human Responsibility," "Difficulties and Objections." It also does not contain the four following appendices: "The Will of God;" "The Case of Adam;" The Meaning of "Kosmos" in John 3:16;" "1 John 2:2." **However, it does contain some very helpful editorial footnotes that the Baker edition does not contain.**

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### LUTHER, MARTIN

**The Bondage of the Will (tenth printing 1998)**

*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. Free will was no academic question to Luther; the whole gospel of the grace of God, he believed, was bound up with it and stood or fell according to the way one decided it... This 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 (front and back cover).*

**Luther recognized this book as his most important work and even said that if all his other books remain, he would hope that this one, along with his *Small Catechism*, would be the only ones to persist.** As noted above, this is one of the most important books of the early Reformation, for it deals with what Luther saw to be the heart of the Gospel.

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.**

In this book he replied to the Roman Catholic scholar, Erasmus, and his diatribe *The Freedom of the Will*. Though disagreeing with the matter at issue between Erasmus and Luther, Luther commended Erasmus for recognizing **the crucial of the just at issue between Rome and the Bible believers, the debate over "free will."** In this regard Luther wrote,

**that unlike all the rest, my soul have attacked the real issue, the essence of the matter in dispute (i.e. man's so-called free-will--RB)... You and you alone saw, what was the grand hinge upon which the whole turned, and therefore you attacked the vital part at once; for which, from my heart, I thank you.**

"This book is most needful at the present day," noted Atherton in 1931, for "the teachings of many so-called Protestants are more in accordance with the Dogmas of the Papists, or the ideas of Erasmus, than with the Principles of the Reformers; they are more in harmony with the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent than with the Protestant or Reformed Confessions of Faith."

It is easy to see how a lack of doctrinal and historical study is leading many into serious compromise with the false eccumenical apostasy espoused by Rome and other idolatrous beliefs which cry up man's ability to save himself (as with Arminianism) and to devise his own methods of worship (as with those that oppose the Reformation's regulative principle of worship in favor of their own will worship). In this area, many "Protestants," even now, bow down to Rome's humanistic, anti-Christian idol of free will.

It is our hope that God will use Luther's classic to give you the strength to remain faithful to His Word; this being a great place to start a new Reformation, for as the translators write concerning this book, "*Nowhere does Luther come closer, either in spirit or in substance to the Paul of Romans and Galatians.*"

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### CALVIN, JOHN

**The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defense of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice Against Pighius (1543, 1996) FIRST TIME ENGLISH TRANSLATION!**

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### SPURGEON, CHARLES H.

**Spurgeon's Sovereign Grace Sermons**

**It is no novelty, then, that I am preaching; no new doctrine. I love to proclaim these strong old doctrines, that are called by nickname Calvinism, but which are surely and verily the revealed truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus.** By this truth I make a pilgrimage into the past, and as I go, I see father after father, confessor after confessor, martyr after martyr, standing up to shake hands with me. Were I a Pelagian, or a believer in the doctrine of free-will, I should have to walk for centuries all alone. Here and there a heretic, of no very honorable character, might rise up and call me brother. But taking these things to be the standard of my faith, I see the land of the ancients peopled with my brethren; I behold multitudes who confess the same as I do, and acknowledge that this is the religion of God's own church. (Spurgeon from the sermon "Election" [S.97, separate booklet "Election"])

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 nick name 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 from his sermon "Christ Crucified" [S.97, separate booklet "Christ Crucified"])

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7. Christ's Work No Failure
8. Christ Crucified
9. The Doctrines of Grace Do Not Lead to Sin
10. Election.

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### OWEN, JOHN

**A Display of Arminianism: Being A Discovery of the Old Pelagian Idol of Free Will, With the New Goddess Contingency Advancing Themselves Into the Throne of the God of Heaven, to the Prejudice of His Grace, Providence, and Supreme Dominion Over the Children of Men...** This was Owen's first publication (1642) and immediately brought him into notice. It contains numerous useful charts contrasting Arminian doctrines, from some of their major teachers, with those of Scripture (Calvinism) in a side-by-side format. Owen leaves no room for compromise with Arminianism as he shows why this is, when sincerely believed, a dangerous, devilish and damnable heresy! This position is simply in keeping with Luther, as C.H. Spurgeon points out, "... and I will go as far as Martin Luther, in that strong assertion of his, where he says, 'If any man doth ascribe of salvation, even the very least, to the free will of man, he knoweth nothing of grace, and he hath not learnt Jesus Christ aright.' It may seem a harsh sentiment; but he who, in his soul believes that man does, of his own free will turn to God, cannot have been taught of God, for that is one of the first principles taught us when God begins with us, that we have neither will nor power, but that He gives both; that he is 'Alpha and Omega' in the salvation of men." (from the sermon "Free Will A Slave," 1855, also see Luther's Reformation classic, *The Bondage of the Will*).

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