

# ARMINIANISM

by

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Jacob Hermann, or in Latin Arminius, (1560-1609), was a Dutch theologian who, after receiving a strict Reformed training, conceived some doubts with respect to the Calvinistic tenets on the sovereign grace of God in salvation and related themes. His followers, called Arminians or Remonstrants, carried matters considerably further than Arminius had done in his writings, and set forth their views in a document called "Remonstrance" and consisting of five articles which may be briefly summarized as follows:

- I. God elects or reprobates on the basis of foreseen faith or unbelief.
- II. Christ died for all men and for every man, although only believers are saved.
- III. Man is so depraved that divine grace is necessary unto faith or any good deed.
- IV. This grace may be resisted.
- V. Whether all who are truly regenerate will certainly persevere in the faith is a point which needs further investigation.

After considerable discussion these views were condemned in the Synod of Dort (1618-19). They were maintained and developed in the Netherlands by H. Uytenbogaert (1557-1644), S. Episcopius (1583-1643), S. Curcellaeus (1586-1659), Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), Ph. a Limborch (1633-1712), and others. Under the leadership of these men Arminianism became characterized by increasing differences from the traditional Reformed faith. The following tenets are commonly held by Arminians:

1. God's knowledge of the future acts of free agents is mediate (*scientia media*).
2. God's decrees are based on his foreknowledge: election on foreseen faith and reprobation on foreseen resistance to grace.
3. The image of God in man consists in man's dominion over the lower creation.
4. Adam was created in innocency rather than in true holiness.
5. The covenant of works was abrogated after the Fall.
6. Sin consists in acts of the will.
7. Pollution is inherited from Adam, but his guilt is not imputed to any of his

descendants.

8. Man's depravity as a result of the Fall should not be described as total.

9. Man has not lost the faculty of self-determination nor the ability to incline his will toward good ends.

10. The atonement was not absolutely necessary, but represents merely one way which God chose among many to manifest his love without prejudice to his righteousness.

11. The atonement is intended equally for all men and for every man, and it merely makes salvation possible. Salvation becomes effectual only when accepted by the repentant believer.

12. There is no common grace to be distinguished from special grace.

13. The external call of the gospel is accompanied by a universal sufficient grace which can be resisted.

14. Repentance and faith precede regeneration.

15. The human will is to be viewed as one of the causes of regeneration (synergism).

16. Faith is a good work of man and a ground of acceptance with God.

17. There is no imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer.

18. The believer is able to attain in this life a state of such conformity to the divine will that he may be called perfect.

19. As long as a man lives he may fall away from grace and lose his salvation altogether.

Certain Arminians were led to profess further that:

20. Love is the supreme attribute of God, the very essence of his being.

21. The goal of creation is the happiness of the creatures (eudaemonism).

22. Man was created naturally mortal.

23. The atonement is not strictly substitutionary and penal, but it is a token performance designed to safeguard the interests of the moral government of God while opening the possibility of salvation on the ground of evangelical obedience (rectoral or governmental theory of the atonement).

24. Assurance of salvation is not possible in this life, except by a special personal

revelation.

In the Netherlands Arminians, as well as many other movements, were profoundly affected by the rationalistic currents of the eighteenth century. The present-day Remonstrants still hold to Pelagian teachings and have lax views of inspiration and of the Trinity.

Outside of Holland Arminianism exercised considerable influence in France, Switzerland, Germany, and England, and hence throughout the world. In a number of cases this point of view gained the upper hand in spite of Calvinistic confessions of faith.

The Wesleyan branch of the Methodist movement embraced vigorously a revised form of Arminianism, sometimes called "evangelical Arminianism." It is characterized by a view of the themes touched upon in 3, 7, 8, and 9, which is slightly less distant from Calvinistic tenets.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beside the works of the authors mentioned above, one might consult the collected works of John Goodwin, John Fletcher, John Wesley and D. Whitby, and the systematic theologies of W. Cooke, J. Miley, W. B. Pope, M. Raymond, T. O. Summers, R. Watson and H. O. Wiley. Able works against Arminianism have been produced by W. Ames, L. Boettner, P. Dumoulin, John Edwards, Jonathan Edwards, J. Gill, J. Owen, S. Rutherford, and many others. Helpful documentation may be found in W. A. Copinger, *A Treatise of Election, Predestination and Grace* (with bibliography of 235 pp.); W. Cunningham, *Historical Theology* II, pp. 371-513; J. L. Girardeau, *Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism*; A. W. Harrison, *Arminianism; The Beginnings of Arminianism*; F. Platt in *HERE*; H. C. Rogge in *SHERK*; P. Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, I, pp. 508-23; III, pp. 544-49; D. D. Whedon, *BS* 19, 241-74.

(This article was taken from *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, pp. 64-65.)