

Sovereign Grace Series

Lesson #6 - The Origins of “TULIP” ²⁰⁰⁶

Amplifying Attachments for Lesson #6

<u>File #</u>	<u>Title</u>
1378	The Pelagian Controversy
1127	What is Sovereign Grace?
1180	Why Does Understanding Sovereign Grace Matter?

Applicable Sections of the Confessions

- **LBC of 1689** NA
- **AoP of 1858** NA

A History Lesson: “To not know what happened before you were born is to forever be a child.” By Cicero *

* Marcus Tullius Cicero born 3 January 106 – 7 December 43 BC) was a Roman statesman, lawyer, scholar, philosopher and Academic Skeptic, who tried to uphold optimate principles during the political crises that led to the establishment of the Roman Empire. His extensive writings include treatises on [rhetoric](#), philosophy and politics, and he is considered one of Rome's greatest [orators](#) and [prose](#) stylists

This controversy regarding “Calvinism” vs. “Arminianism” in the Church goes back to the fourth and fifth century amongst the Church Fathers. During the 5th century Augustine of Hippo (354 - 430) led the Church against a heretical teacher named Pelagius (354 - 440).

“What do the terms “Pelagianism,” “Semi-Pelagianism,” and “Arminianism” mean, and how do they relate to each other?” ¹³⁸⁰

“The terms ‘Pelagianism,’ ‘Semi-Pelagianism,’ and ‘Arminianism’ have in common that they all present a form of synergistic theology; that is, the beginning of man's salvation, in regeneration, is not accomplished by the sole and unilateral act of God, but is produced by God and man ‘working together,’ in some sense. Each of these synergistic systems is in opposition to ‘Calvinism or ‘Augustinianism,’ which teaches that God sovereignly gives to each of his elect a new, living heart which cannot do otherwise than believe in Christ, and so be justified and eternally saved.

Pelagianism, the first and most radical of these synergistic theologies, was expounded by a fourth-century British monk named Pelagius. Pelagius taught that man's nature was not affected by Adam's fall, but that all men are still free to choose good or evil, to obey God or disobey him. Men are not guilty by nature, but only become guilty when they choose to do that which is evil; and Adam's failure did not corrupt his offspring, it just gave them a bad example, which they could choose to follow or not to follow. Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo, was Pelagius' great adversary, and he taught that man is bound in sin according to the scriptures, and that God's commands do not imply man's moral ability to obey them. **Pelagianism was officially condemned by the Church in AD 431, at the Council of Ephesus.**

Semi-Pelagianism is a Reformation-era term that came to designate a softer sort of Pelagianism that arose after the Council of Ephesus, in the sixth century. According to Semi-Pelagianism, man is not free to choose good or evil, but he is at least free to make the first move to God, to turn to him in faith, and so be given the power to choose good by God's grace. Man is not free to do good in his fallen nature, but he is at least able to believe and come to God in his own native strength. This softer variety of Pelagianism was **officially condemned by the Church in 529, at the Council of Orange**; however, the Reformers rightly recognized that the Roman church of the sixteenth century had become thoroughly Semi-Pelagian again.

Arminianism refers to the teachings of Jacobus Arminius, and the **five points of the Remonstrance** which he headed. According to Arminius, man is not so depraved that he cannot naturally seek God; God's election of men is based on his foreseeing the faith they would come to in time; the atonement of Christ was intended for every person on earth, but whether it will actually be applied to anyone in particular rests upon his free decision to believe or not to believe; God's grace is sufficient to enable men to believe if they so choose, but does not necessitate faith; and after a man has come to a genuine saving faith in Christ, he is still free to turn aside and fall away from grace, and so be eternally lost.

The **Synod of Dort, in 1618-1619**, officially condemned Arminianism, and upheld the so-called five points of Calvinism; however, there are many Protestant churches and denominations today that hold to an Arminian theology. Arminianism differs from Semi-Pelagianism in the former's teaching on prevenient grace: against Semi-Pelagianism, Arminianism usually teaches that man does not have the natural ability to believe; however, God extends his prevenient grace to all men without exception, giving them all the moral ability to choose to believe or not to

believe. Whether or not any man is actually saved depends entirely on whether a person chooses to improve upon this prevenient grace, and believe in God.” [Monergism](#) Copyright © 2008

Note: John Calvin and Jacob Arminius were not born until during the Reformation in the 16th century.

Augustinianism’s essential points: a.k.a **Reformed or Sovereign Grace Soteriology**

1. Adam’s sin resulted in the fall of all men from fellowship with God and that man’s natural state after that fall was complete and utter corruption in sin toward God. All men are born spiritually dead towards the God of Scripture.
2. Only through God’s “effectual grace” towards an individual can a man then turn toward God. Here is the idea that God’s grace changes the individual freeing his will from the bondage of sin and death toward freedom in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pelagianism’s essential points: a.k.a - **Modern Theological/Philosophical Liberalism**

1. Pelagius taught that the only negative effect from Adam’s fall into sin was to set a bad example for men. There was no corruption of future generations.
2. According to Pelagius, every infant comes into the world exactly as Adam did, pure and in fellowship with God.
3. Pelagius was a proponent that man’s will was not corrupted by the fall.
4. Pelagius taught that men are not in bondage to sin, but are free to choose to serve God or themselves.
5. Pelagius believed that everyone had the ability to believe the gospel as well as to keep the law perfectly.
6. Pelagius taught that Jesus did not atone for sin, but rather set a good example of how we should choose to live.

Led by Augustine, Pelagius’ teachings were condemned by the Church at the Council of Carthage in 418AD and these condemnations were ratified as heretical at the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD.

Semi-Pelagianism essential points: **Much of Modern Evangelicalism**

From the teachings of Pelagius came a teaching of mystic theologian John Cassian, called Semi-Pelagianism.

1. Man did fall into sin and Adam’s progeny were corrupted by this fall.
2. God has extended a universal grace to all men that enables them to freely choose the atoning work of Christ necessary for their own salvation. This grace is referred to as “prevenient grace”.
3. The final decision as to whether an individual is to be saved is each man’s free choice toward God. “It is mine to be willing to believe, and it is the part of God’s grace to assist.”
4. Everyone according to his own will obeyed or rejected the invitation to accept Christ, while God equally wished and equally aided all men to be saved.

Semi-Pelagianism was condemned as heresy at the Council of Orange in 529 AD.

John Calvin (1509 - 1564) and Jacob Arminius (1560 - 1609) lived during the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe during the Reformation. Jacob Arminius tried to reform John Calvin’s teaching.

The followers of Jacob Arminius after his death established the **Remonstrances** which consisted of 5 points of disagreement with John Calvin’s teachings in 1610.

At the Synod of Dort in 1618 – 1619 (154 meetings), the followers of John Calvin came up with their response to the **Remonstrances** known as the Five Points of Calvinism which are expressed in the acrostic of **TULIP**.

Suggest reading *The Canons of Dort*; a 36 page pamphlet by the Chapel Library (chapel@mountzion.org)

TULIP Synod of Dort in 1618-1619	Remonstrances The Hague in 1610
<u>T</u>otal depravity (also called "total inability") asserts that, as a consequence of the fall of man into sin, every person born into the world is enslaved to the service of sin.	Article III — That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free-will, inasmuch as he, in the state of apostasy and sin, can of and by

<p>People are not by nature inclined to love God with their whole heart, mind, or strength, but rather all are inclined to serve their own interests over those of their neighbour and to reject the rule of God. Thus, all people by their own faculties are morally unable to choose to follow God and be saved because they are unwilling to do so out of the necessity of their own natures. (The term "total" in this context refers to sin affecting every part of a person, not that every person is as evil as possible.)</p>	<p>himself neither think, will, nor do anything that is truly good (such as having faith eminently is); but that it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through his Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good, according to the word of Christ, John xv. 5: <i>"Without me ye can do nothing."</i> Semi-Pelagianism – point #1</p>
<p>Unconditional election asserts that God's choice from eternity of those whom he will bring to himself is not based on foreseen virtue, merit, or faith in those people. Rather, it is unconditionally grounded in God's mercy alone.</p> <p>The doctrine of unconditional election is sometimes made to stand for all Reformed doctrine, sometimes even by its adherents, as the chief article of Reformed Christianity. However, according to the doctrinal statements of these churches, it is not a balanced view to single out this doctrine to stand on its own as representative of all that is taught. Unconditional election and its corollary in the doctrine of predestination are never properly taught, according to Calvinists, except as an assurance to those who seek forgiveness and salvation through Christ, that their faith is not in vain, because God is able to bring to completion all whom He intends to save.</p>	<p>Article I - That God, by an eternal, unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ, his Son, before the foundation of the world, hath determined, out of the fallen, sinful race of men, to save in Christ, for Christ's sake, and through Christ, those who, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, shall believe on this his Son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith, through this grace, even to the end; and, on the other hand, to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving in sin and under wrath, and to condemn them as alienate from Christ, according to the word of the Gospel in John iii. 36: <i>"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him,"</i> and according to other passages of Scripture also. Semi-Pelagianism – point #2</p>
<p>Limited atonement, also called "particular redemption" or "definite atonement", the doctrine of limited atonement is the teaching that Jesus' substitutionary atonement was definite and certain in its design and accomplishment. The doctrine is driven by the Calvinistic concept of the sovereignty of God in salvation and their understanding of the nature of the atonement. Namely, Calvinists view the atonement as a penal substitution (that is, Jesus was punished in the place of sinners), and since, Calvinists argue, it would be unjust for God to pay the penalty for some people's sins and then still condemn them for those sins, all those whose sins were atoned for must necessarily be saved.</p>	<p>Article II - That, agreeably thereto, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he has obtained for them all, by his death on the cross, redemption, and the forgiveness of sins; yet that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins, except the believer, according to the word of the Gospel of John iii. 16: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"; and in the First Epistle of John ii. 2: <i>"And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."</i> Semi-Pelagianism – point #3</p>
<p>Irresistible grace (also called "efficacious grace") asserts that the saving grace of God is effectually applied to those whom he has determined to save (that is, the elect) and, in God's timing, overcomes their resistance to obeying the call of the gospel, bringing them to a saving faith.</p> <p>The doctrine holds that every influence of God's <u>Holy Spirit</u> cannot be resisted, but that the Holy Spirit is able to overcome all resistance and make his influence irresistible and effective. Thus, when God sovereignly purposes to save someone, that individual certainly will be saved.</p>	<p>Article IV — That this grace of God is the beginning, continuance, and accomplishment of an good, even to this extent, that the regenerate man himself, without that prevenient or assisting; awakening, following, and co-operative grace, can neither think, will, nor do good, nor withstand any temptations to evil; so that all good deeds or movements that can be conceived must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ. But, as respects the mode of the operation of this grace, it is not irresistible, inasmuch as it is written concerning many that they have resisted the Holy Ghost,—Acts vii, and elsewhere in many places. Semi-Pelagianism – point #4</p>

<p>Perseverance (or preservation) of the saints. The word <i>saints</i> is used in the Biblical sense to refer to all who are set apart by God, not in the technical sense of one who is exceptionally holy, canonized, or in heaven (see Saint). The doctrine asserts that, since God is sovereign and his will cannot be frustrated by humans or anything else, those whom God has called into communion with himself will continue in faith until the end. Those who apparently fall away either never had true faith to begin with or will return.</p>	<p>Article V — That those who are incorporated into Christ by a true faith, and have thereby become partakers of his life-giving spirit, have thereby full power to strive against Satan, sin, the world, and their own flesh, and to win the victory, it being well understood that it is ever through the assisting grace of the Holy Ghost; and that Jesus Christ assists them through his Spirit in all temptations, extends to them his hand; and if only they are ready for the conflict, and desire his help, and are not inactive, keeps them from falling, so that they, by no craft or power of Satan, can be misled, nor plucked out of Christ's hands, according to the word of Christ, John x. 28: "<i>Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.</i>" But whether they are capable, through negligence, of forsaking again the first beginnings of their life in Christ, of again returning to this present evil world, of turning away from the holy doctrine which was delivered them, of losing a good conscience, of becoming devoid of grace, that must be more particularly determined out of the Holy Scriptures before they can teach it with the full persuasion of their minds.</p>
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The question is, "What does Scripture teach?" In our next 5 lessons of this Sovereign Grace Series, I will present you with the Scriptural evidence for the Augustinian / Lutheran / Calvinist / Sovereign Grace / and original Southern Baptist view. This view is represented precisely in the Westminster Confession, the 1644 London Baptist Confession, the 1677 London Baptist Confession, the 1689 London Baptist Confession, and the Southern Seminary (SBC) Abstract of Principles 1848.

You should know that two of the 6 Southern Baptist Seminaries require their professors to sign and agree to teach in accordance with the Abstract of Principles of 1858 (The first Statement of Faith of the Southern Baptist). This Abstract of Principles is a Sovereign Grace document clearly teaching God's sovereignty in the salvation of sinners. These two seminaries are Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky and Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

As we have already seen, God is absolutely Sovereign in all affairs of His created order. He must certainly be likewise purposeful and sovereign in His selection of those who constitute the bride of Christ.

Important Quotes

It is a mystery, and if you do not get excited about preaching this, I'm not sure what will excite you! The gospel is simply the most transformative, the most powerful, and the most explosive message there is. If you have a problem finding something to preach, I guarantee that you are not preaching the gospel.

Albert Mohler; *A Passionate Plea for Preaching*

The real difference between Arminianism and Calvinism is the determination of Arminians to combine their Christian testimony with the rationalist-irrationalist presupposition of autonomy. Only rarely do we meet with attempts to prove free-will - for most it just remains an assumption. Unfortunately for those evangelicals caught up in this confusion, it is also the fundamental assumption of humanism. Calvin tries to bring all of our assumptions to the bar of Scripture by bringing every thought into captivity to Christ (2 Cor 10:5). The negative side of the Calvinist apologetic against Arminianism is basically just the extrapolation of the challenge to Arminians to be consistent to their basic presupposition while yet trying to maintain the biblical gospel. It just cannot be done, for more and more must be given up.

R. K. McGregor Wright; *No Place for Sovereignty*; p. 106