



FOREWORD BY THOMAS R. SCHREINER & BRUCE A. WARE

SALVATION BY GRACE

THE CASE FOR EFFECTUAL CALLING
AND REGENERATION

MATTHEW BARRETT

“The relationship between saving faith and regeneration is vitally important in the biblical doctrine of salvation. It is a watershed issue in the debate between historic Calvinism and historic Arminianism. Although one can savingly believe the gospel without rightly understanding this relationship, the integrity of the biblical witness to the grace of God in that gospel cannot be consistently maintained without recognizing the priority of regeneration in the application of salvation. Dr. Barrett sees this truth clearly and argues persuasively for the monergistic—or Calvinistic—position. His arguments are exegetically careful, theologically rigorous, and historically informed. Monergists will welcome this book as a helpful guide to the issues at stake, and synergists will not be able to ignore its devastating critique of their strongest arguments.”

—**Thomas Ascol**, Pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Cape Coral, Florida;
Executive Director of Founders Ministries; Editor of the Founders
Journal

“Either God is sovereign or he is not. Matthew Barrett takes the bull by the horns and demonstrates that only the affirmation of complete divine sovereignty in all things can do justice to what God has done for our salvation. Attempts to water this down by finding room for human cooperation may be well-meaning, but they are bound to fail. This is a timely book on a perennially important subject, specially geared to meet current challenges. Every pastor and theologically alert Christian should read it.”

—**Gerald Bray**, Research Professor of Divinity, Beeson Divinity School,
Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama

“A movement that Collin Hansen identifies as young, restless, and Reformed is afoot. It entails a resurgence of Calvinist doctrine among young Christian scholars, many of whom are writing excellent PhD dissertations and recasting them as accessible books. Matthew Barrett may be young, restless, and Reformed, but even more, he is an emerging scholar and theologian who possesses great energy and passion for the gospel and for Christ’s church. His book *Salvation by Grace* reflects both his passion for God’s glory as revealed in the gospel and his energy to make clear for all his readers that when God calls everyone whom he purposes to save, his call is effectual and the Spirit’s making us alive is solely a divine act and not of our doing at all, given the fact that we were dead in our tombs of trespasses and sins, no less than the senseless and decaying body of

Lazarus in the tomb of death. *Salvation by Grace* reaffirms a time-honored teaching of the Scriptures, carefully accounts for monergism's corollary doctrines, and freshly presents it all for a new generation of young and perhaps restless minds that Matthew Barrett would like to influence to embrace the Reformed doctrine that salvation in Christ is entirely of God's effectual grace."

—**A. B. Caneday**, Professor of New Testament Studies & Biblical Theology, Northwestern College, St. Paul, Minnesota

"A number of virtues make *Salvation by Grace* a truly outstanding piece of work. The subject is timely. Even though the issues are old, they present themselves in new guises right up to the present. Barrett writes elegantly, his style belying the complexity of the subject. It is a learned book, showing masterful knowledge of the many sources discussed. Here we have polemics at their best, and yet the book is an opportune encouragement for anyone doubting the fully sovereign nature of God's love in giving us salvation."

—**William Edgar**, Professor of Apologetics, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

"Do we come to God or does he draw us to himself? This is the key question that divides monergism from synergism. Matthew Barrett has written an extremely helpful book and makes a strong case for monergism in the regeneration and effectual calling of sinners to Christ. This work is exegetically extensive, historically informed, and theologically thorough. Anyone who wants to understand the differences between monergism and synergism will find Barrett's work an able guide."

—**J. V. Fesko**, Academic Dean and Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology, Westminster Seminary California

"Calvin shocked the world and altered the course of history with a radical idea: God works miracles in the human heart. This, not predestination, was his signature contribution. Matthew Barrett's *Salvation by Grace* marshals a magnificent body of evidence that this explosive claim is scriptural."

—**Greg Forster**, Author, *The Joy of Calvinism*

"The doctrine of effectual calling—a better term than 'irresistible grace'—is at the heart of what it means to confess that Jesus Christ is the sole and sufficient Savior of spiritually dead sinners. Matthew Barrett has done a masterful job of

describing this teaching in its biblical, historical, and theological dimensions. An important book for theologians and all Christians who seek to understand the deepest meaning of God's grace."

—**Timothy George**, Founding Dean, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University; General Editor, Reformation Commentary on Scripture

"The issue tackled in this fine work is an ancient one: it was briefly touched on by Irenaeus in his debates with Gnostic determinists, and then fully aired in the fourth and fifth centuries by Augustine in his critique of Pelagianism. Of course, this was not the end of the story; it came up again in the writings of the Saxon theologian Gottschalk, only to be refought during the Reformation by numerous Reformation theologians in their replies to the Church of Rome. And it has been revisited a number of times since that major turning point in church history. Dr. Barrett is, then, in good company in defending this perspective on salvation. And in commending this work, we do not wish for more controversy, but hope and pray that the position recommended in the book might be pondered deeply by all who read it, and biblical truth ultimately prevail."

—**Michael A. G. Haykin**, Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Director of The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies & Research Professor of Irish Baptist College, Constituent College of Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland

"The Reformed idea of God's effectual call hails from the days of Augustine. Nowadays, it is often caricatured as treating men and women like puppets. In this comprehensive study, Matthew Barrett shows that the doctrine lies at the center of the application of God's sovereign grace to men and women who are unable to help themselves, restoring them to their true selves. The treatment is informative and judicious and, above all, timely."

—**Paul Helm**, Teaching Fellow, Regent College, Vancouver

"Matthew Barrett's *Salvation by Grace* is a compelling and much-needed reminder that the doctrine of monergistic regeneration is, as B. B. Warfield once put it, 'the hinge of the Calvinistic soteriology.' It is also a bold yet winsome challenge to the all-too-common assumption that the saving efficacy of the cross is ultimately determined not by God but by 'the will of man.' Fair, judicious, and admirably sensitive to the exegetical and theological subtleties of both classical and

contemporary discussions, Barrett capably demonstrates why Reformed believers insist that synergistic views of regeneration subvert the teaching of Scripture and surrender the glory of God in salvation. Enthusiastically recommended.”

—**Paul Kjoss Helseth**, Professor of Christian Thought, Northwestern College, St. Paul, Minnesota

“Matthew Barrett’s *Salvation by Grace* contributes significantly to the burgeoning literature on Reformed theology by young scholars. He ably leads the reader through philosophical and historical elements of the centuries-old debate between monergism and synergism. He correctly notes, however, that the primary issue is biblical and theological. Barrett identifies monergism—that God acts alone to effectually and sovereignly regenerate depraved sinners—as the sine qua non of biblical exegesis faithful to the Bible. A tour de force defense of the Calvinist doctrine of God’s sovereignty, *Salvation by Grace* illustrates the biblical concept of the unity of truth. After demonstrating that Augustinian original sin, Calvinist total depravity, and Lutheran bondage of the will correctly capture the Bible’s teaching on human nature, Barrett effectively shows the indispensability of interpreting faith, repentance, and conversion monergistically through careful exegesis of biblical texts. Faithful adherence to the coherence and consistency of biblical texts guides Barrett’s argument. Barrett also marshals ample confessional support for monergism from the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Confession. Finally, a careful probing of Arminian scholarship rounds out this fine book. What emerges is the vast diversity of synergistic interpretations that clutter the historical landscape, from Pelagius’s humanistic synergism to an array of contemporary evangelical views. Given the complexity of synergisms in the Arminian tradition, one finds it difficult, if not impossible, to discern any unity of truth that holds the field together. I came away from Barrett’s examination of monergism with a new appreciation for the benefits derived from adhering to confessional evangelicalism.”

—**Andrew Hoffercker**, Emeritus Professor of Church History, Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi

“‘Salvation is of the LORD.’ All Christians would affirm this good news. Yet only monergism carries it through to the end, without equivocation. In this winsome and well-researched defense, Matthew Barrett clears away the brush—caricatures and distortions on both sides of the debate—to expose the wonder of God’s amazing grace. After drawing a precise historical map of the

range of views, Barrett engages the relevant passages with fresh insight and energy. His goal is not to win an argument but to win brothers and sisters to a fuller, richer, and more biblical account of the application of redemption.”

—**Michael Horton**, J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics, Westminster Seminary California

“The Arminian controversy in the Netherlands continues to rumble on in varying forms centuries later. Recently, a number of Arminian theologians—and others attempting a middle path—have highlighted these questions again. Barrett carefully considers their arguments from both biblical and theological angles. This is a thorough and persuasive piece of work, demonstrating that only the consistent monergism of classic Reformed theology does justice to the gospel as a work of God’s grace.”

—**Robert Letham**, Senior Lecturer in Systematic and Historical Theology, Wales Evangelical School of Theology

“Matthew Barrett’s *Salvation by Grace* provides a theological feast for its readers. Barrett shows a profound grasp of historical theology on this issue, a clear and pertinent deftness in exegesis, an impressive knowledge and understanding of the doctrinal nuances and connections, a detailed understanding of the contemporary literature on it, and a convincing way of synthesizing the vital points of argument. I agree with him; but if one does not agree with him, this is still a book to read in order to know what is at stake in the discussion.”

—**Tom J. Nettles**, Professor of Historical Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

“We all desire a view on the doctrines of grace that gives the lion’s share to God, both the work and the credit. Here you will find a compelling articulation of a view that does precisely that. Read this book and then rejoice in the God of our salvation, who brings about the miraculous transformation of sinners into saints—all to the praise of his glorious grace.”

—**Stephen J. Nichols**, Research Professor of Christianity and Culture, Lancaster Bible College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

“Matthew Barrett’s work on regeneration represents scholarship at its best. His book is exegetically convincing and theologically profound, with significant

pastoral consequences. The topic has not been explored in depth in recent scholarship, and hence this book is also timely.”

—**Thomas R. Schreiner**, James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

“Writing as an evangelical to evangelicals, and particularly reflecting the sometimes-heated soteriological discussions current within his Southern Baptist setting, Matthew Barrett here addresses for a new day issues highlighted by B. B. Warfield in his *The Plan of Salvation* (1918).”

—**Kenneth J. Stewart**, Professor of Theological Studies, Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, Georgia

“This is quite simply the most thorough and convincing account of divine sovereignty, both over the new birth and over effectual calling, that I’ve ever read. It is historically informed, lucidly written, eminently practical, and, most important of all, biblically faithful. This book, and Matthew Barrett in particular, renews my confidence that the so-called young, restless, and Reformed are in good hands and moving in the right direction. *Salvation by Grace* merits a wide reading and will undoubtedly prove to be an indispensable resource for the serious student of God’s Word. I cannot recommend it too highly.”

—**Sam Storms**, Lead Pastor for Preaching and Vision, Bridgeway Church, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

“*Salvation by Grace* approaches a deep and controversial topic with the goal of understanding it according to the Scriptures. Although very well reasoned, this is not primarily a philosophical or apologetic argument, but one that shows the biblical foundation for the linchpin of Calvinism. With an eye on the past as well as the contemporary debate, Dr. Barrett does an outstanding job of helping the reader understand why Calvinists hold their view and why they believe it really matters. The glory of God as the One who saves us from ourselves is powerfully presented so that the reader may be led to deeper worship, humility, and confidence.”

—**Erik Thoennes**, Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies; Chair, Biblical and Theological Studies Theology Department, Biola University and Talbot School of Theology, La Mirada, California

“The nature of grace is central to the Christian faith, and how one defines it speaks volumes about how one understands God, Christ, salvation, and even the church. In this book, Matthew Barrett lays out the historical, theological, and biblical material, and presents a compelling case for classic anti-Pelagian theology. Very helpful.”

—**Carl R. Trueman**, Paul Woolley Professor of Church History, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

“Whether you are looking at this book because you assume that you already agree or disagree with Matthew Barrett, or perhaps aren’t sure where you come down on these issues, don’t assume that you are holding in your hands a run-of-the-mill defense of classic Calvinist doctrine. What Barrett has given us in this book is a careful examination of the biblical-theological case for the sovereignty of God in salvation and a fair and accurate analysis of the historical and modern debates surrounding this vital doctrine. At the end of the day, this doctrine is not simply a matter for debate—it is about what the Bible reveals as the only hope of salvation that lost sinners in rebellion against their Creator have. So put aside all bias and the personal animosity that too often marks this debate, and prayerfully read the case that Barrett makes for salvation being, from beginning to end, the work of God alone.”

—**Brian Vickers**, Assistant Professor of New Testament Interpretation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

“Matthew Barrett has provided a tremendous resource for thoughtful Christian readers, both Arminian and Calvinist, in his careful and insightful analysis of the doctrines of God’s calling and regeneration of sinners to salvation. Since these doctrinal areas are at the heart of the great divide between an Arminian and a Reformed soteriology, it is critical that we understand clearly what the Scriptures say on these matters. Barrett’s illuminating discussion of the history of these doctrines, and his masterful treatment of all the relevant biblical passages, makes this book one of the most important contributions for adjudicating our differences and for leading us into a more faithful understanding of God’s gracious saving work in our lives as believers. For clarity in theological understanding, and for the sake of our own souls, I heartily recommend this book.”

—**Bruce A. Ware**, Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

“The perennial debate regarding the relationship between God’s sovereign grace and initiative and human sin and choice in our salvation continues unabated in our present day. Even so, Matthew Barrett’s very helpful defense of God’s sovereign and effectual grace in our salvation is much needed. In *Salvation by Grace*, Barrett not only sets the debate in historical context, but also, in a biblically faithful and theologically accurate manner, provides a convincing defense of God’s sovereign initiative in salvation—a defense that ultimately and rightly underscores our triune God’s incredible and amazing grace toward sinners. I highly recommend this work.”

—**Stephen Wellum**, Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky; Editor, The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology

“The testimony of Scripture is that ‘salvation belongs to the LORD!’ (Jonah 2:9). In *Salvation by Grace*, Matthew Barrett calls us to revel in this truth. As an heir of the Reformation, with the pastoral zeal and careful thinking that were part of that sixteenth-century revival, he reminds us that what we think about this subject matters. God’s glory and our assurance of salvation are wrapped up in whether God chooses and saves us or whether we choose him. Barrett’s work combines careful historical research, meticulous biblical exegesis, and thoughtful theological formulation. As you read it, worship the God who raises dead sinners to life in Christ!”

—**Shawn D. Wright**, Associate Professor of Church History, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

“Barrett’s examination of this critical area of theology is historically informed, providing an accurate setting and perspective for the discussion. It is also theologically precise, providing definitive expositions of all sides of the debate. It is surprisingly exhaustive, treating all the primary arguments and counter-arguments responsibly. And most importantly, it is exegetically compelling, bringing God’s own Word to bear on a doctrine designed to bring him glory. A valuable resource indeed! Highly recommended.”

—**Fred G. Zaspel**, Pastor, Reformed Baptist Church, Franconia, Pennsylvania; Adjunct Professor of Theology, Calvary Baptist Seminary, Lansdale, Pennsylvania

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THE CASE FOR EFFECTUAL CALLING
AND REGENERATION

MATTHEW BARRETT



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To my wife,
Elizabeth Barrett.

“An excellent wife who can find?
She is far more precious than jewels.
The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.”

Proverbs 31:10–11

CONTENTS

Foreword: Bruce A. Ware and Thomas R. Schreiner	ix
Acknowledgments	xiii
Abbreviations	xv
Publisher's Note	xvii
Introduction: The Contemporary Debate	xix
1. Monergism in the Calvinist Tradition	1
2. Total Depravity and the Bondage of the Will	37
3. The Scriptural Affirmation of Effectual Calling	69
4. The Scriptural Affirmation of Monergistic Regeneration	125
5. Arminian Synergism in Theological Perspective	207
6. The Inadequacy of Arminian Synergism	247
7. The Failure of Recent Attempts at a Middle Way	283
Conclusion	315
Select Bibliography	319
Index of Scripture	367
Index of Subjects and Names	379

FOREWORD

One thing is clear to classical Arminians and Calvinists alike: if the grace by which we are saved is efficacious—irresistible—grace and only some and not all are saved, then this saving grace is given only to some (the elect) and not to all. And what happens as this saving, efficacious, irresistible grace, otherwise known as God’s effectual calling of the elect to salvation, is extended to them? By this efficacious calling and grace—and therefore of divine necessity in the lives of the elect—they are regenerated; they express saving faith in God’s atoning work for them in Christ; and they are thereby saved once and forever. Sovereign grace reigns here, as God first, in eternity past, chooses among the sinful and guilty human race those whom he, in his mercy, will save; and then in time and history he bestows on them the efficacious grace by which their dead hearts are enlivened and their blind eyes are opened. As this happens in them, they truly and savingly believe! Yet the expression of their faith, although a genuinely human expression of their natures made new by the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit, owes all that it is to the sovereign grace of God, which brought about in them both their new hearts and their newfound saving faith. As Ephesians 2:8–9 makes clear, both the “grace” and “faith” by which we are saved are, together, “the gift of God . . . that no one should boast.”

If, on the other hand, the grace that comes to us assisting our salvation is grace that we can accept or reject—a grace that only makes possible our salvation, while leaving the final and decisive outcome squarely in our hands—then our salvation is not purely and fully the result of sovereign grace. In this case, not only do we have a part to play in our salvation, we have the most decisive part: providing the thumbs

up or thumbs down on where we will spend eternity, despite what God wants, wills, or does, since the same grace is given to all, and that grace is equally resistible by all.

The core differences, then, between classic Arminianism and Reformed theology in the doctrine of salvation focus on the nature of the grace by which we are saved. Although there are other important differences, this is “ground zero,” as it were, in the battle being waged over these two mutually exclusive understandings of the salvation of sinners.

Over a decade ago, we edited a volume intended to defend various aspects of the doctrines of grace within a Reformed soteriology.¹ One of the reasons we felt the need for this book at the time was to demonstrate the difference between Arminian and Reformed understandings of the nature of saving grace. We realized that the Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace and the Reformed doctrine of efficacious grace both function as lynch pins within their own soteriological models. Included in our volume was an essay by Schreiner in which he contended that the Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace, though essential to an Arminian soteriology, could not rightly be supported or defended from Scripture. A second essay by Ware sought to demonstrate that the Reformed doctrine of efficacious calling and grace was fully supported and upheld by Scripture. If this is true—if the Arminian conception of prevenient grace lacks biblical support and the Reformed understanding of effectual calling and grace is a biblical teaching—then the long-standing debate between these two soteriological models is virtually settled. Yes, other issues also are important to deal with, but this issue—the issue of the nature of the grace by which we are saved—is central and ultimate in the whole of this debate.

In the light of the importance of this issue, we are thrilled by the major treatment Matthew Barrett has given to this crucial and central doctrinal area of our faith. It is hard to imagine a study of the passages, positions, and issues any more carefully and thoroughly done than Dr. Barrett has provided here. Our hope and prayer is that readers on

1. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware, eds., *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000).

both sides of the debate—as well as many “undecided voters” tilting one way or the other as they consider various arguments—will do themselves and others the favor of giving careful consideration to the biblical case made here for a full and decisive sovereign, saving grace.

Ultimately, we are pleased for the publication of this book because we believe that the truths it puts forward and the biblically saturated articulation they are given speak loudly of the glory of God in our salvation. To God alone belongs all glory. May greater numbers of his people see his sovereign grace in their salvation and ascribe to him the glory due to his name and to his name alone. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
Louisville, Kentucky

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project could not have been completed without the help and encouragement of others. First, I would like to thank my dissertation committee. My supervisor, Bruce Ware, was the first to hear my ideas for this project and from beginning to end his expertise has been invaluable to my writing. For years, Bruce has given to me an outstanding example of Christian scholarship in his writings defending Calvinism against Open Theism and Arminianism. I only hope to emulate his excellent ability to defend and expound the Scriptures clearly and acutely. His passion for the glory of God is unwavering, and he has given me a deep love and appreciation for the doctrines of grace and the sovereignty of God.

I would also like to thank Shawn Wright, whose superb knowledge of the Reformation and Post-Reformation periods saved me from much unnecessary labor. As a graduate of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary himself, Shawn's excellent dissertation on Theodore Beza has provided me with a tremendous example of a dissertation well done. Finally, I want to thank Tom Schreiner, whose excitement for my topic was unrelenting. Tom has for years taught in the classroom the priority of regeneration to faith, taking on all objections, and his keen sense for biblical exegesis in this project is found throughout. Furthermore, Tom's faithful preaching of the Word each Sunday has continually nourished my soul and shown me what it means to magnify God in Christ.

Besides my dissertation committee, I would also like to express my appreciation to my external reader, Michael Horton, J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics at Westminster

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Seminary, California. Horton's review of this project was both illuminating and encouraging. Horton continues to be for me an excellent example of a theologian committed to seeing the biblical truths of the Reformation proclaimed once again in our own day.

Finally, the most important person in my life is my wife, Elizabeth. We met at Biola University, and together we both developed a love for theology. Her zeal for knowing God never ceases to amaze me. Elizabeth has read and commented on every page (and footnote!) of this project. Many times she did this in the midst of mothering our daughters, Cassandra and Georgia, a privilege she treasures above all. I embark on few theological adventures without Elizabeth's input and remarkable scrutiny. Therefore, it is to Elizabeth that I dedicate this project.

Matthew Barrett
Louisville, Kentucky
May 2011

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
ATJ	Ashland Theological Journal
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>CTJ</i>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
<i>DBSJ</i>	<i>Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal</i>
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
ESV	English Standard Version
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBTM</i>	<i>Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
KJV	King James Version
LCC	Library of Christian Classics
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary

ABBREVIATIONS

NKJV	New King James Version
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
REC	Reformed Expository Commentary
RR	Review of Religion
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book is an abridged version of the author's original dissertation. To read the original, please see the e-book version from P&R Publishing, *Reclaiming Monergism: The Case for Sovereign Grace in Effectual Calling and Regeneration* (hereafter referred to as *Reclaiming Monergism*, e-book), which includes chapters on the history of the monergism-synergism debate; more extensive chapters representing and critiquing synergism; appendixes on the love of God, the will of God, and the relationship between effectual calling and regeneration in the Reformed tradition; as well as an extensive bibliography.

INTRODUCTION: THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE

How important is the doctrine of sovereign grace, as displayed in effectual calling and regeneration, to the system of Calvinism? According to B. B. Warfield, “Monergistic regeneration—or as it was phrased by the older theologians, of ‘irresistible grace’ or ‘effectual calling’—is the hinge of the Calvinistic soteriology, and lies much more deeply embedded in the system than the doctrine of predestination itself which is popularly looked upon as its hall-mark.”¹ Such a statement by Warfield is astonishing given the enormous focus on other issues such as the problem of evil or God’s election in eternity by Calvinists and Arminians. However, Warfield is not alone. Today Calvinist theologians still agree, believing that monergistic regeneration is the *sine qua non* of salvation.² For example, when asked what *the* difference is between an Arminian and a Calvinist, both R. C. Sproul and Sinclair Ferguson responded that it is the doctrine of monergistic regeneration. As Sproul stated, while Calvinists and Arminians can argue about many other issues, the litmus test is whether regeneration precedes faith in the *ordo salutis* or, stated otherwise, whether one has or does not have the ability to cooperate with the grace of regeneration.³ According to Sproul, the shibboleth for deciding whether or not one is a Calvinist or an Arminian is the doctrine of monergistic regeneration, the belief that God alone acts

1. Benjamin B. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, vol. 5 of *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 359.

2. R. C. Sproul, *What Is Reformed Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 188.

3. R. C. Sproul and Sinclair Ferguson, “Questions and Answers #3” (session held at the annual meeting of the Ligonier Ministries National Conference, Orlando, FL, 21 March 2009). Also see R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1986), 72–73.

to irresistibly and effectually call and regenerate the dead and passive sinner from death to new life, thereby causing the sinner to respond in faith and repentance.⁴

Whether or not regeneration precedes faith and is accomplished by God's sovereign will alone (monergism) or is conditioned upon man's faith, requiring man's free-will cooperation for its efficacy (synergism), continues to be one of the most important (or in Warfield's opinion *the* most important) divisions between the Calvinist and the Arminian today. As Scott Warren observes, "Perhaps the doctrine that most evidently distinguishes an Arminian theological framework from a Calvinist framework can be found in the *ordo salutis*—specifically in the question of whether faith precedes or follows regeneration."⁵ Warren is lucid: the doctrine of regeneration is the very hinge on which the debate turns. Yet, if Warfield, Sproul, and Ferguson are right that monergistic grace is the very hinge of Calvinistic soteriology, then it is no small issue that such a doctrine is under reconsideration by contemporary evangelicals. The traditional Calvinistic view is once again being challenged not only by Arminians but by those who wish to propose a modified scheme.

THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE

While monergism is an old doctrine, its relevance today is apparent as the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have been characterized by a resurgence of Calvinism, and with it a resurgence of a predestinarian theology which exalts God's sovereignty rather than the will of man.⁶ As J. Ligon Duncan III explains, "A fever for the glory of God has gotten into the bloodstream of a new generation."⁷ Duncan goes on to show that the resurgence of Calvinism has occurred in part because Christians are famished with the small view of God they have

4. Sproul, *What Is Reformed Theology?*, 185.

5. Scott C. Warren, "Ability and Desire: Reframing Debates Surrounding Freedom and Responsibility," *JETS* 52 (2009): 551.

6. J. Ligon Duncan III, "The Resurgence of Calvinism in America," in *Calvin for Today*, ed. Joel R. Beeke (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2009), 227–40.

7. *Ibid.*, 227.

been fed and are hungry for the “big view of God” portrayed in the Scriptures and systematically articulated in the doctrines of grace. The doctrines of effectual calling and monergistic regeneration are but a slice of this biblical view of God and yet, as seen above, they may be the very hinge of the Calvinist position. In short, the Calvinist argues that God and man do not cooperate but God alone acts to regenerate the sinner, causing man to repent and believe in Christ. The grace that the Spirit applies to the elect is not resistible but effectual and monergistic. It is not man’s will, but God’s will, that is the cause of new life. Therefore, for the Calvinist, effectual calling and regeneration causally and logically precede conversion in the *ordo salutis*. Moreover, the Calvinist is convinced that monergism preserves the sovereignty and glory of God in salvation while synergism robs God of his sovereignty and glory. Sovereignty is preserved because God’s will in salvation is not conditioned upon man’s will nor can it be successfully resisted by man’s will if God should so choose to save. God’s glory is preserved because God alone is the cause of the new birth. If God’s grace is dependent upon the will of man for its success, then God does not receive all of the credit.

However, with the resurgence of Calvinism has come a counter response from those within the Arminian tradition.⁸ While Calvinism places an emphasis on God’s sovereign grace, not only as displayed in predestination but in the application of monergistic grace in effectual calling and regeneration, Arminianism rejects monergism and instead affirms synergism, the view that God and man cooperate, making God’s

8. David Basinger and Randall Basinger, eds., *Predestination and Free Will* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986); Clark Pinnock, ed., *The Grace of God and the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989; repr., Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1995), and *Grace Unlimited* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999); Thomas C. Oden, *The Transforming Power of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993); Robert E. Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free Will: Contrasting Views of Salvation: Calvinism and Arminianism* (Nashville: Randall House Books, 2002); Jerry L. Walls and Joseph R. Dongell, *Why I Am Not a Calvinist* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004); Jack W. Cottrell, “The Classical Arminian View of Election,” in *Perspectives on Election: Five Views*, ed. Chad O. Brand (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 70–134; Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), and *Against Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011); David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke, eds., *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010).

grace conditional upon man's free will (see chapter 5). However, two types of Arminian synergism exist. First, there are those Arminians who affirm a *God-initiated synergism*. Man is totally depraved but God provides a universal prevenient grace whereby man's depravity is mitigated and man's will is enabled to either cooperate with or resist God's grace. While God initiates and enables, ultimately man has the final say as to whether or not God's grace will be effective.⁹ Such a view, often labeled "classical Arminianism" or "evangelical Arminianism," was advocated by Jacob Arminius and John Wesley, and contemporary advocates include Roger Olson and Wesleyan Thomas Oden (see chapter 5).¹⁰ Historically, such a view shares many affinities with the Semi-Augustinianism of the Middle Ages. Second, there are other Arminians who reject the doctrine of total depravity and argue that there is no such thing as prevenient grace in Scripture. Instead, while sin does have a negative effect on man, man is still able to exercise his free will and initiate grace in order to either accept or reject the grace of God. This Arminian view, which we can call a *man-initiated synergism*, was affirmed by Arminian Remonstrant Philip Limborch in the seventeenth century and is today advocated by Jack Cottrell, Bruce Reichenbach, and Clark Pinnock (see chapter 5).¹¹ Historically, such a view of synergism is consistent with the Semi-Pelagianism that Augustine wrote against. Nevertheless, despite these differences, both groups of Arminians agree that at the moment of decision the final determinative say is in the hands of the sinner to either accept or reject grace.

Today there has been an increasing effort by classical Arminians such as Thomas Oden and Roger Olson not only to refute contemporary Calvinists, but to clear the "Arminian" name from Pelagian and Semi-

9. See James Arminius, "Certain Articles to be Diligently Examined and Weighed," in *The Writings of James Arminius*, 3 vols., trans. James Nichols and William Nichols (Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956), 2:497. Also see Cottrell, "Classical Arminian View of Election," 120–21.

10. Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 137–78; Oden, *Transforming Power of Grace*, 31–208.

11. Cottrell, "Classical Arminian View of Election," 116–22; Pinnock, "From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology," in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, 21–24; Bruce R. Reichenbach, "Freedom, Justice, and Moral Responsibility," in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, 286.

Pelagian accusations. Consequently, Olson has put immense effort into representing “classical Arminianism,” as opposed to the Semi-Pelagian Arminianism represented by Cottrell, Reichenbach, and Pinnock, in order to make Arminianism more appealing to evangelicals today.

Synergism is any theological belief in free human participation in salvation. Its heretical forms in Christian theology are Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism. The former denies original sin and elevates natural and moral human ability to live spiritually fulfilled lives. The latter embraces a modified version of original sin but believes that humans have the ability, even in their natural or fallen state, to initiate salvation by exercising a good will toward God. When conservative theologians declare that synergism is a heresy, they are usually referring to these two Pelagian forms of synergism. Classical Arminians agree. . . . Contrary to confused critics, classical Arminianism is neither Pelagian nor semi-Pelagian! But it *is* synergistic. Arminianism is *evangelical synergism* as opposed to heretical, humanistic synergism. . . . I am referring to evangelical synergism, which affirms the prevenience of grace to every human exercise of a good will toward God, including simply nonresistance to the saving work of Christ.¹²

It is clear from what Olson says that Calvinism’s monergism has a counteropponent in Arminianism’s synergism. While there have existed and do exist today those Arminians of a Semi-Pelagian stripe, Olson is making an effort to counter contemporary monergists with a synergism that is tasteful to evangelicals. Olson is not alone, but his Arminian synergism is reiterated by others including Robert Picirilli, Kenneth Keathley, Steve Lemke, Jeremy Evans, Jerry Walls, Joseph Dongell, among others (see chapter 5).

Moreover, not only have contemporary Arminians reacted strongly to the monergism of Calvinism, but those who affirm a modified position also have responded with a model of their own. The modified position which has gained perhaps the most popularity and momentum

12. Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 17–18.

among contemporary evangelicals is that of Millard Erickson, Gordon Lewis, and Bruce Demarest.¹³ Such a view, while it borrows from both Arminianism and Calvinism, never fully agrees with either. The modified view's differences are easily demonstrated through the logical ordering of salvation. In the classical Arminian view prevenient grace is primary, followed by man's free will decision in conversion, and consequently God's response in regeneration. Therefore, regeneration is causally conditioned upon man's free-will choice to accept or reject God's grace. For Calvinism, the *ordo salutis* differs drastically. God does not respond to the sinner but the sinner responds to God. God's choice does not depend on the sinner's, but the sinner's choice depends on God's mercy and grace. Therefore, God's special calling is particular and effectual (as opposed to a calling that is universal, prevenient, and resistible) and regeneration monergistic. Consequently, effectual calling and regeneration causally precede conversion.

However, the modified view borrows and diverges from both of these views. While the modified view affirms a special calling that is effectual and prior to conversion, it denies that regeneration causally precedes conversion. Instead the modified view argues that regeneration is causally conditioned upon conversion.¹⁴ While advocates of this view readily acknowledge that they are borrowing not only from Calvinism but also from Arminianism,¹⁵ nevertheless, they insist that they remain monergists.¹⁶ Indeed, Demarest even includes his view ("Regeneration a Work of God in Response to Faith") as part of the "*Reformed Evangelical*" position.¹⁷ As shall be shown in chapter 7, Erickson, Lewis, and Demarest are defining monergism differently and more broadly than the Reformed tradition has defined it in the past, and the modified scheme, which places

13. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 901–78; Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology, vol. 4 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997), 49–96, 203–312; Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 3:17–172.

14. Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 3:57, 104.

15. *Ibid.*, 3:57.

16. For example, see Demarest, *Cross and Salvation*, 289.

17. *Ibid.*, 289–91. Emphasis original. Lewis and Demarest title their view "moderately Reformed" and a "modified Calvinistic hypothesis." Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 3:57.

conversion between effectual calling and regeneration, is nothing short of a novelty as it is without precedent among Reformed theologians.

However, Erickson, Lewis, and Demarest are not the only ones who try to lay claim to the label of “monergism.” More recently, Kenneth Keathley also claims he is justified in adopting the term “monergism,” a surprising move in light of the fact that Keathley’s view is almost identical to the Arminian position. Keathley rejects the modified view of Erickson, Lewis, and Demarest, as it concedes too much to the Calvinist affirmation of effectual calling.¹⁸ Instead, Keathley puts forward a very traditional Arminian view of synergism when he rejects the distinction between the gospel call and the effectual call and in its place affirms that God’s call is universal, God’s grace is resistible, man’s freedom is libertarian, and conversion is logically prior to regeneration. Monergism for Keathley means that God alone can be called the author of salvation, and he is not thwarted in his intention to save *as long as* man “refrains from resisting,” a definition radically different from how Calvinists use the term.¹⁹

In summary, for the Arminian, Calvinism’s doctrine of monergistic grace must be rejected, and for the modified advocate the doctrine must be qualified and altered at the very least. Such recent opposition demonstrates that while the monergism-synergism debate is an old one, it has taken on new significance in contemporary theology. Nevertheless, the question remains as to who is right. Does synergism or monergism best adhere to what Scripture says about the application of God’s grace to the sinner?

WHAT THIS BOOK IS ALL ABOUT

The monergism-synergism debate is not first and foremost a *philosophical* debate, nor is it primarily a *historical* debate, as important as

18. Kenneth Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty: A Molinist Approach* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 101–35.

19. As will become evident, Keathley’s arguments are no different from those of Arminian Roger Olson, who likewise says God’s grace is always successful as long as man is nonresistant (see Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 154–55). Therefore, I will interact with Keathley’s objections when I address classical Arminianism.

philosophy and history are to the discussion. Rather, the debate is primarily a *biblical-theological* debate. While Calvinists and Arminians disagree over a range of issues, both agree that the Bible must have the ultimate authority. Nevertheless, each view purports to be the biblical position. The thesis of this project will argue that the biblical view is that God's saving grace is monergistic—meaning that God acts alone to *effectually* call and *monergistically* regenerate the depraved sinner from death to new life—and therefore effectual calling and regeneration causally precede conversion in the *ordo salutis*, thereby ensuring that all of the glory in salvation belongs to God not man. Stated negatively, God's grace is not synergistic—meaning that God cooperates with man, giving man the final, determining power to either accept or resist God's grace—which would result in an *ordo salutis* where regeneration is causally conditioned upon man's free will in conversion and, in the Calvinist's opinion, would rob God of all of the glory in salvation. As J. I. Packer states, "All Arminianisms involve a measure of synergism, if not strong (God helps me to save myself) then weak (I help God to save me)."²⁰ And as John R. de Witt concludes, synergism essentially is "an attack upon the majesty of God, and puts in place of it the exaltation of man."²¹

This thesis evaluates both the Arminian and modified views as unbiblical in nature and consequently as failing to do justice to the scriptural portrayal of God's sovereignty and glory in salvation. Moreover, since the glory of God is at stake, such a debate is no small matter. Perhaps nobody understood this as much as John Calvin. Commenting on Calvin's monergism, I. John Hesselink remarks, "If that grace is undercut by some form of cooperation (synergism) between a semiautonomous 'free' human being and the sovereign Lord, the glory of God is compromised, as far as Calvin is concerned."²² The thesis of this project is in agreement with Calvin

20. J. I. Packer, "Arminianisms," in *Puritan Papers*, vol. 5: 1968–1969, ed. J. I. Packer (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 39.

21. John R. de Witt, "The Arminian Conflict and the Synod of Dort," in *Puritan Papers*, vol. 5, ed. Packer, 23.

22. John I. Hesselink, *Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 72.

precisely because Scripture itself denies that God's decision to regenerate his elect is conditioned upon man's cooperation. Only monergistic grace can fully preserve the sovereignty, glory, and majesty of God.²³ Therefore, while the present day Arminian and modified views seek to gain contemporary adherents, this project is relevant in that it is a call to evangelicals to reject the temptation of synergism in its various forms and return to the traditional Calvinist position, which is most faithful to Scripture.

VOCABULARY IN THE DEBATE

Too often in projects of this sort, whether it is from an Arminian or a Calvinist perspective, labels are thrown around carelessly. Consequently, caricatures result which only hinder dialogue in the debate. Therefore, it is crucial to categorize the terms that will be used throughout this project in relation to their respective parties. There are historical roots to both the monergism and synergism views.²⁴ Specifically, as many historians and theologians have recognized, we can identify at least four distinct positions concerning the monergism-synergism debate throughout church history: (1) humanistic monergism, (2) human-initiated synergism, (3) God-initiated synergism, and (4) divine monergism.²⁵ Each of these positions can be identified with certain groups within church history: (1) humanistic monergism is the view of Pelagius and Pelagianism, (2) human-initiated synergism is the view of Semi-Pelagianism, (3) God-initiated synergism is the view of the Semi-Augustinians, and (4) divine monergism is the view of Augustine and the Augustinians. Calvinism and Arminianism drew from these historical positions of the early and late Middle Ages. Calvinism appeals to Augustine for its view of efficacious grace.

23. John M. Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 186.

24. See chapter 2 of *Reclaiming Monergism*, e-book, to see how the four categories outlined in this section can be traced throughout church history.

25. Robert A. Peterson and Michael D. Williams, *Why I Am Not an Arminian* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 20–41.

On the other hand, Arminianism is diverse. Some, such as Philip Limborch and, today, Jack Cottrell and Clark Pinnock, advocate a view which aligns itself with Semi-Pelagianism. However, many Arminians have rejected Semi-Pelagianism and instead have affirmed what is the equivalent of the Semi-Augustinian view as they seek to be faithful to Arminius himself.²⁶

While these groupings may not encompass every theologian or movement, they are descriptive of the majority and serve to categorize each view according to the historical context. The parameters of this project are not broad enough to include an exhaustive history of all the views mentioned above. Other very capable historians have provided such histories elsewhere. Instead, this project will limit itself primarily to the theological arguments of the Calvinist position, the Arminian views, and recent modified views, drawing secondarily from history where necessary to show the origins, developments, and arguments of each view.

CONCLUSION

With these categories in mind we are now ready to enter into the monergism-synergism debate.²⁷ We shall begin in chapter 1 by first examining how monergism has been defined and defended in the Calvinist tradition. In chapter 2 we will turn to Scripture's affirmation of man's

26. William Gene Witt, "Creation, Redemption and Grace in the Theology of Jacob Arminius" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1993), 2:612.

27. There are four significant presuppositions to this project that should be identified. (1) This entire discussion assumes the legitimacy of the *ordo salutis* as a theological category. (2) Union with Christ serves as an umbrella category within which the entire *ordo salutis* finds its beginning, fulfillment, and *telos*, though it is in effectual calling and regeneration that the sinner is first united to Christ in time. (3) While all three persons of the Trinity are at work in each stage of salvation, it is the Holy Spirit in particular who takes on a central role in effectual calling and regeneration. (4) While there are diverse views among Reformed theologians as to the relationship between effectual calling and regeneration, I sympathize with older Reformed confessions/theologians who see them as intimately connected, if not synonymous. For a more extensive treatment of each of these, including an entire appendix devoted to number 4, see *Reclaiming Monergism*, e-book, from P&R Publishing.

total depravity and bondage of the will. Chapters 3 and 4 will make the case that in Scripture not only is there a gospel call but an effectual call. Furthermore, when Scripture speaks of regeneration it does so in monergistic terms. Chapter 5 will transition to the Arminian view(s), seeking to represent the synergistic position, while chapter 6 will provide a critique, demonstrating that such a view is unbiblical. Finally, chapter 7 will assess contemporary attempts at a *via media*, arguing that such attempts are fundamentally flawed.



MONERGISM IN THE CALVINIST TRADITION

This chapter will enter into the historical context in which the doctrine of monergism has been defended by seeking out several key representatives from the Reformed tradition, including Augustine, Calvin, the Canons of Dort, and the Westminster Confession.¹ While these are only a small sampling of the many voices in Reformed theology, they do serve to bring out the best formulations in the Calvinist tradition. They also demonstrate that this tradition has consistently affirmed the doctrine of monergism as that which is taught in Scripture and has rejected various forms of synergism as unbiblical. By examining these specific representatives we will see *exactly how* Calvinists historically have made their case for the doctrine of monergism. To skip over the history of a debate that is almost two millennia old would be irresponsible and runs the risk of applying labels (Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, etc.) inaccurately. We can avoid this error by carefully examining some of the major monergism-synergism controversies.

AUGUSTINE: *DOCTOR GRATIAE*

Sovereign grace is typically associated with Calvinism, and for good reason, since it was John Calvin and his followers who articulated the

1. For many other Reformed confessions, see James Dennison Jr., ed., *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries in English Translation*, 3 vols. to date (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2008–12). For interaction with far more secondary sources on Augustine, Calvin, Dort, and Westminster, see chapter 1 of *Reclaiming Monergism*, e-book, from P&R Publishing.

doctrine of effectual grace so clearly against the synergists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, in reading Calvin it is immediately apparent that he was not inventing the doctrine but was himself tremendously indebted to Augustine (354–430). As Albert Outler has noted, the “central theme in all Augustine’s writings is the sovereign God of grace and the sovereign grace of God.”² Therefore, it is Augustine who is the *terminus a quo* for the debate over grace and free will.³ However, in order to understand Augustine’s gracious monergism one must first understand Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism.

Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, and Semi-Augustinianism

Pelagius (c. 350), educated in Eastern theology (i.e., Antiochian) with a thorough knowledge of the Greek fathers, had a zeal that manifested itself in the ascetic legalism of monastery life and moral reform.⁴ However, it was the theology behind the moral reform that aroused the attention of Augustine.

First, Pelagius denied *tradux peccati* (transmitted sin) and *peccatum originis* (original sin), consisting of both inherited guilt and corruption.⁵ To Pelagius, it is blasphemous to think that God would transmit or impute Adam’s guilt and corruption to his progeny. Instead, Adam was an isolated person, not a representative of all mankind, and his act of sin injured himself alone, merely setting a bad example for all who followed to imitate.⁶

2. Albert C. Outler, “Introduction,” in Augustine, *Confessions and Enchiridion*, LCC, vol. 7, ed. Albert C. Outler (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), 14–15. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Augustine are designated by book and are taken from *Answer to the Pelagians I–IV*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Roland J. Teske, part 1, vols. 23–26 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Boniface Ramsey (New York: New City, 1997–99).

3. Mark E. Vanderschaaf, “Predestination and Certainty of Salvation in Augustine and Calvin,” *RR* 30 (1976–77): 1.

4. See B. R. Rees, *Pelagius: Life and Letters*, 2 vols. in one (Rochester, NY: Boydell, 1998), 1:xiv; Pelagius, *Pelagius’s Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Theodore De Bruyn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

5. Rees, *Pelagius*, 1:91; William J. Collinge, “Introduction,” in *Saint Augustine: Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*, trans. John A. Mourant and William J. Collinge (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 8–9.

6. Augustine, *Nature and Grace*, in *Answer to the Pelagians I*, 10; Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans*, 92; Robert F. Evans, *Four Letters of Pelagius* (New York: Seabury, 1968), 97; J. Patout Burns, “Introduction,” in *Theological Anthropology*, ed. and trans. J. Patout Burns, Sources of

Second, since no guilt or corruption is inherited by Adam's posterity, the will is free, unhindered by a depraved nature.⁷ The will is not enslaved to sin or in bondage to sin, but is just as able after the fall as before to choose that which is good.⁸ Therefore, Pelagius took offense at Augustine's prayer, *Da quod iubes, et iube quod vis* ("Give what you command; command what you will"), because these words "undermine moral responsibility."⁹

Third, since man is not infected by the guilt or corruption of Adam's sin and consequently man's will retains its ability to choose good or evil equally, an assisting grace lacks necessity. For Pelagius the will is not free if it is in need of God's help. Therefore, he rejected irresistible grace, as evident in his interpretation of Romans 8:29–30, "Those he foreknew would believe he called. Now a call gathers together those who are willing, not those who are unwilling."¹⁰ Grace does not consist in a sovereign or efficacious work of the Spirit upon a depraved sinner, as it would for Augustine, but in a mere external *illuminatio* (illumination) or revelation (enlightenment) of (1) the law of God, (2) creation, and (3) the example of Christ.¹¹ Therefore, salvation is monergistic for Pelagius but it is a *humanistic* monergism because God's aid (*adjutorium*) is not fundamentally necessary or prevenient since man is able in and of himself to exercise works of righteousness that merit eternal life, and therefore save himself.¹²

Early Christian Thought (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 5–6, 10–22; Rees, *Pelagius*, 1:35–36; Collinge, "Introduction," 8–9.

7. Augustine, *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin*, in *Answer to the Pelagians I*, 1.5; Rees, *Pelagius*, 1:35–36.

8. Pelagius, *Letter to Demetrias* 16.2, in Rees, *Pelagius*, 2:53; Collinge, "Introduction," 8.

9. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding, ed. John E. Rotelle, part 1, vol. 1 of *Works*, 10.40; idem, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, trans. Bruce Harbert, in *On Christian Belief*, part 1, vol. 8 of *Works*, 32 (hereafter *Enchiridion*, in *Works*); Rees, *Pelagius*, 1:1; Evans, *Pelagius*, 82.

10. Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans*, 112. Also see Evans, *Pelagius*, 121.

11. "Caelestius was accused at Carthage in 411 of teaching that the Law had the same effect as the Gospel in introducing men into the kingdom of heaven." Pelagius ran into the same problem at the Synod of Diospolis. Rees, *Pelagius*, 1:32–36; Evans, *Pelagius*, 111–14; Collinge, "Introduction," 8–9.

12. Pelagius states in his *Letter to Demetrias*, "It is by doing his will that we may merit his divine grace." Rees, *Pelagius*, 1:92 (cf. 1:15, 32; especially 1:129).

The theology of Pelagius was adopted by Caelestius, who became one of Pelagius's foremost advocates, as well Julian of Eclanum.¹³ Both affirmed a “*human monergism*” which “assumes that the power of the human will is decisive in the experience of salvation.”¹⁴ As Bonner observes, “Julian of Eclanum did not hesitate to speak of man as ‘emancipated from God’ by the possession of free will, while Caelestius asserted that the will could not be free if it need the help of God, since each of us has it in his power either to refrain from acting.”¹⁵ However, Pelagianism would be condemned by the Councils of Carthage (418), Mileve (418), and Ephesus (431), though, as seen at Carthage, Augustine’s doctrines of predestination and effectual grace were not affirmed either.¹⁶

Pelagianism, however, was not the only view Augustine battled. Semi-Pelagianism—represented by John Cassian, Faustus of Riez, Vincent of Lérins, Gennadius of Massilia, and Arnobius, as well as the monks at Hadrumetum (Adrumetum) in Northern Africa and Southern Gaul—would also pose a threat to Augustine’s view of grace as it sought a *via media* between Augustine and Pelagius.¹⁷ In this view, while man does need God’s universal grace due to the crippling effect of sin (contra Pelagianism), man is not so corrupted by the fall that he cannot initiate salvation in the first place (contra Augustine).¹⁸ As Cassian states, “When he [God] notices good will making an appearance in us, at once he enlightens and encourages it and spurs it on to salvation, giving

13. Augustine summarizes the views of Caelestius in *The Deeds of Pelagius*, in *Answer to the Pelagians I*, 29–34.

14. Paul K. Jewett, *Election and Predestination* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 6n2.

15. Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (Norwick: Canterbury, 1986), 361.

16. “The Canons of the Council of Carthage, A.D. 418,” in Burns, *Theological Anthropology*, 57–60.

17. For an in-depth study of Semi-Pelagianism, see Rebecca H. Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996).

18. Augustine, *On Rebuke and Grace*, in *Answer to the Pelagians IV*, 45; John Cassian, *The Conferences*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, Ancient Christian Writers, 57 (New York: Newman, 1997), 13.9. Augustine wrote to the monks at Hadrumetum in his works *Grace and Free Choice* and *On Rebuke and Grace*. Augustine wrote to the monks in Southern France (Gaul) in his works *The Predestination of the Saints* and *The Gift of Perseverance*.

increase to what he himself planted and saw arise from our own efforts.”¹⁹ Therefore, while Pelagius taught a *humanistic* monergism and Augustine a *divine* monergism, the Semi-Pelagians taught a *human-initiated synergism*. Man is able to take the first move toward God, cooperating with or resisting his grace.²⁰

Though Semi-Pelagianism won victories in Gaul at the Synods of Arles (472) and Lyons (475), it was condemned by the Synod of Orange (529), and yet Orange did not return completely to Augustinianism, refusing to accept irresistible grace, but rather, under the influence of Prosper of Aquitaine, endorsed what is today labeled Semi-Augustinianism, as did the Synod of Valence (529).²¹ Semi-Augustinianism advocates a *God-initiated synergism*. While man is incapable of initiating salvation due to the bondage of his will, God provides a universal, prevenient grace, mitigating total depravity, enabling man to cooperate.²² While God is credited with the initiation of salvation, ultimately man’s will has the final say and determination. As will be seen in chapter 5, the synergism of classical Arminianism would closely parallel Semi-Augustinianism.

Augustine and the *Causa Gratiae*

When Augustine first came to affirm sovereign grace, Pelagianism was not what initially motivated him. Ten years prior to the controversy (c. 400) Augustine, reflecting on what Paul says in Romans 9, wrote *Confessions*, in which he exposes the depravity and utter inability of man’s free will and exalts the sovereign grace of God.²³ Augustine’s affirmation of sovereign grace was truly a reflection upon the events of his own conversion in the garden at Milan.²⁴ But Augustine was officially provoked when Pelagius wrote *On Nature (De Natura)* and *On Free Will*

19. Cassian, *The Conferences*, 13.8.

20. Robert A. Peterson and Michael D. Williams, *Why I Am Not an Arminian* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 21–40.

21. “The Synod of Orange, A.D. 529,” in Burns, *Theological Anthropology*, 109–28.

22. Peterson and Williams, *Why I Am Not an Arminian*, 38–39.

23. Augustine, *Confessions*, 10.32.

24. Bonner, *St. Augustine*, 357–58.

“since in them he had too little to say about divine grace and too much about the human will.”²⁵

First, contrary to Pelagius, Augustine, on the basis of passages like Psalm 51; Ephesians 2:1–3; John 3:3–5; and especially Romans 5:12, affirmed the doctrine of original sin as a universal reality making all of mankind a *massa peccati* (mass of sin) deserving damnation.²⁶ When Adam sinned, via pride (*superbia*), he brought all of his progeny from a *status integritatis* (state of integrity) to a *status corruptionis* (state of sin). Besides inheriting *originalis reatus* (original guilt), Adam’s progeny inherited a corrupt and depraved nature, leading Augustine to say with Paul, “There is none who seeks after God” (Rom 3:11).²⁷ Augustine, reading Paul, argues that the corruption inherited from Adam is pervasive in nature, meaning that every aspect of man (will, mind, affections, etc.) is infected by sin so that no part of him escapes sin’s pollution.

Second, one of the consequences of the fall and the transmission of corruption is the captivity of the will. The will, while previously able to choose good (meaning sin was only a *possibility* not a necessity), after the fall finds itself enslaved to sin, transgressing out of *necessity*. While before the fall the will of man possessed the *posse peccare* (the ability to sin) and the *posse non peccare* (the ability not to sin), after the fall the will of man is *non posse non peccare* (not able not to sin).²⁸ Consequently, though before the fall man possessed an inclination for good, after the fall man’s will is inclined toward evil, making sin its master.²⁹ Augustine, however, does not mean that as a result of the fall man no longer has moral agency, for that would mitigate culpability. On the contrary, the

25. Rees, *Pelagius*, 1:9. It should be noted that Caelestius was the first target in Augustine’s anti-Pelagian writings though Augustine would respond to Pelagius for the first time in 415 with *On Nature and Grace*.

26. Bonner, *St. Augustine*, 371.

27. Augustine, *Marriage and Desire*, in *Answer to the Pelagians II*, 2.47; idem, *Nature and Grace*, in *Answer to the Pelagians I*, 21; idem, *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins*, in *Answer to the Pelagians I*, 1.10.

28. Augustine, *On Rebuke and Grace*, in *Answer to the Pelagians IV*, 31–33.

29. Augustine, *Enchiridion*, in *Works*, 104–6; idem, *The Perfection of Human Righteousness*, in *Answer to the Pelagians I*, 9.

issue is not whether or not man has moral agency but whether moral agency after the fall is good or evil.³⁰

It could be objected, however, that if man is a slave to sin, there can be no freedom of the will, for he does not sin voluntarily. However, Augustine argues that this bondage is a *willful* bondage to sin (*servum arbitrium*). Yes, without the *adiutorium Dei* the sinner is unable to will righteousness and therefore he sins necessarily. However, it is not the case that the sinner wants to will righteousness and God will not let him. Rather, the sinner does not *desire* or *want* to will righteousness at all. Therefore, he is both free and a slave simultaneously. He is free in the sense that he sins willfully according to the desires of his flesh. However, his sinful desires stem from a corrupt nature and therefore he sins out of necessity.³¹ Augustine argues from John 8:36 and Ephesians 2:8 that it is only by God's saving grace that man can be set free from his slavery to sin and instead become, as Paul says, a slave to righteousness. For Augustine the sinner possesses a *liberum arbitrium captivatum* (captive free will) and is in need of a grace that liberates, resulting in a *liberum arbitrium liberatum* (liberated free will).³² Grace, therefore, does not abolish the will but establishes it (John 8:24–26; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 5:1).

Third, Augustine not only taught that grace is necessary but also that it is both particular and efficacious. God does not bestow his special, saving grace upon all of mankind and wait to see if man will cooperate with it (i.e., synergism), but God works upon his elect in an irresistible manner, giving the sinner a new heart and a renewed will so that the sinner *will* respond in faith and repentance (i.e., monergism). Therefore, it is God's grace that causes and effects man's will to respond in faith, rather than man's will that causes and effects God's grace.³³

30. Augustine, *Grace and Free Choice*, in *Answer to the Pelagians IV*, 31.

31. Augustine, *Enchiridion*, in *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*, 2 vols., ed. Whitney J. Oates (New York: Random, 1948), 1:675.

32. Augustine, *Answer to the Two Letters of the Pelagians*, in *Answer to the Pelagians II*, 1.9; idem, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 1984), 5.10; 14.6; idem, *Enchiridion*, in *Works*, 30, 104–6.

33. See Augustine, *Answer to the Two Letters of the Pelagians*, 2.18, 21–22, 23; 4:14; idem, *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin*, in *Answer to the Pelagians I*, 1.27, 34; idem, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, in *Answer to the Pelagians IV*, 13, 15, 39, 41; idem, *The Punishment*

Irresistible grace is the natural consequence of an omnipotent Savior. An omnipotent God cannot have his will defeated.³⁴ God has “omnipotent power over human hearts to turn them where he pleased.”³⁵ However, *gratia irresistibilis* does not mean that man does not resist God, but rather that when God so chooses to act upon his elect he overcomes all of man’s resistance. Augustine demonstrates from texts like 1 Corinthians 1:24; Romans 8:28–29; 9:12–13; and 11:25–29 that there are two distinct callings, one universal and the other particular.³⁶ The former is the gospel call that many people reject while the latter is efficacious, so that those whom the Father draws always come to Jesus. Citing John 6:45, Augustine explains, “But everyone who has learned from the Father not only has the possibility of coming, but actually comes!”³⁷ As a consequence of God’s special call, the sinner’s heart of stone is replaced with a heart of flesh by the power of the Spirit (Ezek. 11:19–20; 36:22–27).³⁸ Only then can the sinner begin to love God. In other words, it is the sovereign act of the Spirit, not man’s free choice, that causes the sinner to experience new affections for Christ.³⁹ Those who have been awakened to new life by efficacious grace have a will that has been liberated, renewed, and reoriented to desire God rather than sin.⁴⁰

and Forgiveness of Sins, in *Answer to the Pelagians I*, 2.5, 30; idem, *Enchiridion*, in *Works*, 31–32; idem, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, in *Answer to the Pelagians I*, 52; idem, *On Grace and Free Choice*, 17, 29, 32–33, 40.

34. Augustine, *On Rebuke and Grace*, in *Answer to the Pelagians IV*, 45.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 32–33.

37. Augustine, *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin*, 1.27. Also see idem, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 13; idem, *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin*, 1.14–15; 1.19–22.

38. Augustine, *Grace and Free Choice*, 29; idem, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 40–43.

39. Augustine, *The Spirit and Letter*, 5.

40. Augustine, *On Rebuke and Grace*, 3; idem, *The Gift of Perseverance*, in *Answer to the Pelagians IV*, 53; idem, *Grace and Free Choice*, 31, 32, 41; idem, *On Rebuke and Grace*, 35. Augustine also appeals to 1 Cor. 4:7; Prov. 8:35; Ps. 37:23; Phil. 2:13; and especially Rom. 9:16 to demonstrate that though our wills are evil God grants us a good will, not on the basis of anything in us but because of his own good pleasure. Augustine, *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins*, in *Answer to the Pelagians I*, 2.27–30; idem, *Enchiridion*, in *Works*, 32; idem, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, 11; idem, *Answer to the Two Letters of the Pelagians*, 2.21; idem, *Grace and Free Choice*, 32.

Fourth, if it is God who must liberate the will from its bondage to sin, so also it is God who must grant man faith to believe.⁴¹ According to Augustine, Scripture teaches that faith is *gratia dei gratuita* (a gift from God) rather than a product of man's autonomous will.⁴² Augustine appeals to passages like Ephesians 1:13–16; 2:8; Philippians 1:28–29; and 1 Thessalonians 2:13 to show that the *initium fidei* (beginning of faith) is all of God. Moreover, Augustine is clear that faith is not merely offered as a gift but God actually works faith within. In other words, when God calls us to faith, he does not merely make faith possible but actually makes sure we will come to faith without fail. As Augustine states, “The will itself is something God works [*operatur*] in us.”⁴³ Therefore, Carey is right to conclude that for Augustine grace is not merely a “*necessary precondition* of faith but a *sufficient cause* of it . . . not only prevenient but *efficacious* in itself.”⁴⁴ Interpreting John 6:45, Augustine argues that “God’s grace gives us actualities, not mere possibilities.” Grace “does not simply make faith possible; it causes us to believe.”⁴⁵ And yet, coercion is nowhere in view, but rather an “ineffable sweetness” (1 Cor. 3:7).⁴⁶

The Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian controversies thus turn upon one question: is redemption the work of God or the work of man? Stated otherwise, does grace depend upon the will of man or does the will of man depend upon grace? For Augustine, if grace is not necessary, sufficient, and efficacious, God is robbed of his glory and man given the credit in salvation.

THE REFORMATION

Augustine’s understanding of sin and grace would be influential, infiltrating the theology of Prosper of Aquitaine, Fulgentius of Ruspe, Avitus of Vienne, and Caesarius of Arles, even being restated in works

41. Augustine, *The Spirit and the Letter*, 54, 57–60.

42. Augustine, *Grace and Free Choice*, 30; idem, *The Predestination of the Saints*, 16.

43. Augustine, *Revisions*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, part 1, vol. 2 of *Works*, 3.3.

44. Phillip Cary, *Inner Grace: Augustine in the Traditions of Plato and Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 55, emphasis added. Also see 56, 87–88, 95.

45. *Ibid.*, 96.

46. Augustine, *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin*, 1.14.

like the *Indiculus* (c. 435–42).⁴⁷ However, by others “Augustine was reinterpreted, so that theologians came to call themselves ‘Augustinian’ while rejecting his views on irresistible grace and predestination.”⁴⁸ To make matters worse, Semi-Pelagianism, despite being condemned by the Council of Orange, continued to spread during the medieval period.⁴⁹

The Late Medieval Background

At least two scholastic schools of thought emerged in the late medieval period, one being the *via moderna* and the other the *schola Augustiniana moderna*. The *via moderna*, represented by William of Ockham, Pierre d’Ailly, Robert Holcot, and Gabriel Biel, held an optimistic view of human ability, arguing that man is able to do everything needed to be right with God.⁵⁰ In contrast, the *schola Augustiniana moderna*, represented by Thomas Bradwardine, Gregory of Rimini, and Hugolino of Orvieto, held a pessimistic view of man’s ability, arguing, similar to Augustine, that man can do nothing apart from effectual grace. As Ozment and McGrath explain, the debate between these schools was a replay of the controversy between Pelagius and Augustine.⁵¹

47. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)*, vol. 1 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 318–31. Prosper, however, would soften Augustine’s views considerably. See Prosper, *Grace and Free Will*, vol. 7 of *The Fathers of the Church*, ed. Joseph Deferrari, trans. J. Reginald O’Donnell (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1947), 1.5.

48. Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity*, 2 vols. (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1984), 1:215.

49. I have chosen to bypass the *early* medieval era. This does not mean that the monergism-synergism debate did not continue after Augustine (see Gregory the Great, Gottschalk, Councils of Quiercy and Valence, Anselm, Aquinas, Ockham, etc.), but only that I have chosen to focus very briefly on the late medieval ages due to the immediate context it provides to Reformers like Calvin.

50. David C. Steinmetz, *Luther in Context* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 61–62; Alister McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 73–74, 90–92, 178; Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform, 1250–1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven: Yale, 1980), 40 (cf. 41, 234–37); Heiko A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 207.

51. Ozment, *The Age of Reform*, 40–42; Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 72; idem, *Intellectual Origins*, 104–5.

The position of the *via moderna* can be summarized by the slogan *facere quod in se est*, meaning “doing what lies within you” or “doing your best.” In other words, the demands of God’s covenant were that man is to do his best and when he does God is obligated to accept his work as sufficient for eternal life. Stated otherwise, *facienti quod in se est Deus non denegat gratiam* (“God will not deny grace to anyone who does what lies within them”).

In contrast, the *schola Augustiniana moderna* reacted strongly to the *via moderna*, especially as it took root at the University of Oxford, Merton College. Bradwardine ignited the backlash with his book *De causa Dei contra Pelagium* (*The Case of God against Pelagius*), in which he attacked the *via moderna* as modern-day Pelagianism and argued for a return to Augustine’s anti-Pelagian writings.⁵² Bradwardine’s arguments would be reiterated by John Wycliffe (1328–84) in England but it would be Gregory of Rimini (c. 1300–1358) who would be responsible for an “Augustinian renaissance,” whereby salvation was considered totally the work of God.⁵³

In spite of the *schola Augustiniana moderna*, the *via moderna* would have an enormous influence as the church became characterized by a Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism that relied heavily on a sacramental theology of merit. By the late Middle Ages, as McGrath argues, it “was widely held that salvation was something that could be earned by good works, which included fulfilling the moral law and observing a vast range of ecclesiastical rules.”⁵⁴ Consequently, though there were exceptions, “popular Pelagianism was rampant”

52. Thomas Bradwardine, *De Causa Dei*, ed. Henry Savile (Frankfurt: Gruyter, 1964), 1.42. Also see Gordon Leff, *Bradwardine and the Pelagians: A Study of His “De Causa Dei” and Its Opponents* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 69; Heiko A. Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought*, trans. Paul L. Nyhus (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 151–64; McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 57–60; Jaroslav Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300–1700)*, vol. 4 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 32.

53. Heiko A. Oberman, *Masters of the Reformation*, trans. Dennis Martin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 70–71; idem, *Forerunners of the Reformation*, 151–64.

54. Alister E. McGrath, *Studies in Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 386.

and pure soteriological Augustinianism was lost.⁵⁵ However, with the Reformation would come a return to an Augustinian soteriology, with an emphasis on the efficacy of grace and the sovereignty of God in salvation.

The Reformers

Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings were "a rich resource for the Reformers in establishing their views of the 'servitude' of the human will and the freeness and power of divine grace."⁵⁶ As Childs Robinson observes, "On account of its rediscovery of the doctrines of grace, the Reformation has been hailed as a revival of Augustinianism. . . . Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox—all echo Augustine's conviction that grace does not find us willing; it makes us willing."⁵⁷ For example, Martin Luther, who was immersed in the theology of the *via moderna* at the University of Erfurt (1501–5) and again at the Augustinian monastery (1505), not only countered the Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism of the *via moderna* with his biblical understanding (cf. Rom. 1:17) of the *iustitia Dei* (initially aroused by his burning question *Wie kriege ich einen gnädigen Gott?*), but also, in his 1525 *De servo arbitrio* (*Bondage of the Will*) against Erasmus's 1524 *De libero arbitrio* (*Diatribes on Free Will*; cf. *Hyperaspistes I, II*), defended an Augustinian understanding of man's depravity and God's efficacious grace over against Erasmus's Ockhamist Semi-Pelagianism.⁵⁸

One must not miss the close connection between justification by grace alone (*sola gratia*) through faith alone (*sola fide*) on the basis of Christ's work alone (*solus Christus*) and the doctrine of efficacious grace. If justification is by faith alone, then it is by grace not works, and if by grace, then it is the gift of God. Moreover, if it is the gift of God, then even faith itself must be the gift of God. And if faith itself is a gift of

55. *Ibid.*, 387.

56. Paul Helm, *Calvin at the Centre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 202.

57. Childs Robinson, *The Reformation: A Rediscovery of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 8. Also see Carl R. Trueman, "Calvin and Reformed Orthodoxy," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 476.

58. Martin Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, vol. 33 of *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1957).

God, then it follows that God and God alone brings new life into the dead sinner, creating repentance and faith in Christ. As Calvin says, faith as a work itself (“I am justified *because I believe*”) is ruled out completely, so that in no way can it be said that it is my decision that brings about justification.⁵⁹ McGrath explains,

A popular misunderstanding of the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith is that we are justified *because we believe*, that it is our decision to believe that brings about our justification. Here faith is understood as a human work, something which we do—and so we are justified on the basis of our works! This is actually the later doctrine, especially associated with seventeenth-century Arminianism, of “justification *propter fidem per Christum*,” justification on account of faith through Christ (rather than “justification *per fidem propter Christum*,” justification by faith on account of Christ). The Reformation doctrine affirms the activity of God and the passivity of humanity in justification. Faith is not something human we do, but something divine that is wrought within us. “Faith is the principal work of the Holy Spirit” (Calvin), and it is through faith that Christ and all his benefits are received.⁶⁰

J. I. Packer also makes a similar observation that is telling:

“Justification by faith only” is a truth that needs interpretation. The principle of *sola fide* is not rightly understood till it is seen as anchored in the broader principle of *sola gratia*. What is the source and status of faith? Is it the God-given means whereby the God-given justification is received, or is it a condition of justification which it is left to man to fulfill? Is it a part of God’s gift of salvation, or is it man’s own contribution to salvation? Is our salvation wholly of God, or does it ultimately depend on something we do for ourselves? Those who say the latter (as the Arminians later did) thereby deny man’s utter helplessness in sin,

59. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, LCC, vols. 20–21 (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 3.11.7. Also see Helm, *Calvin at the Centre*, 214, 220.

60. McGrath, *Studies in Doctrine*, 391.

and affirm that a form of semi-Pelagianism is true after all. It is no wonder, then, that later Reformed theology condemned Arminianism as being in principle a return to Rome (because in effect it turned faith into a meritorious work) and a betrayal of the Reformation (because it denied the sovereignty of God in saving sinners, which was the deepest religious and theological principle of the Reformers' thought). Arminianism was, indeed, in Reformed eyes a renunciation of New Testament Christianity in favour of New Testament Judaism; for to rely on oneself for faith is no different in principle from relying on oneself for works, and the one is as un-Christian and anti-Christian as the other. In the light of what Luther says to Erasmus, there is no doubt that he would have endorsed this judgment.⁶¹

Therefore, though the doctrines of forensic justification and moral regeneration must remain distinct (the former a change in status and the latter a change in nature), they are intimately connected in attributing to God alone the efficacy in creating within us saving faith, a reality Arminianism would later struggle to explain in demanding that grace be conditioned upon man's free will.

JOHN CALVIN: THEOLOGIAN OF SOVEREIGN GRACE

While not all Reformers would adhere to Augustine's monergism (note, for example, the synergism of Philip Melancthon), most would owe a debt to Augustine as they drew from his works in order to defend the irresistibility of grace in the elect against the papist synergism of their day. This is apparent in a host of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformers.⁶² First among these is the second-generation Reformer John

61. J. I. Packer, "Historical and Theological Introduction," in Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957), 59. Also see Richard B. Gaffin, "Justification and Union with Christ (3.11–19)," in *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes*, ed. David W. Hall and Peter A. Lillback (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 259.

62. Consider Theodore Beza, Conrad Vorstius, Huldrych Zwingli, Heinrich Bullinger, Amandus Polanus, Wolfgang Capito, Peter Martyr Vermigli, Girolamo Zanchi, John à Lasco, Martin Bucer, John Knox, Zacharias Ursinus, Caspar Olevianus, Lambert Daneau, Francis Junius, William Perkins, Heinrich Bullinger; Johannes Wollebius; Franciscus Gomarus; William Ames, James Ussher, Gisbertius Boetius, Franciscus Burmannus, Herman Witsius,

Calvin. No other Reformer articulated the monergism of Augustine as well as Calvin.

Calvin's understanding of grace is explicit both in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536–59) and in *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will* (1543), which is his reply to the Dutch Roman Catholic and Louvain scholar Albertus Pighius, who represented the Vatican at Worms and Regensburg (1540/41).⁶³ In *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will* Calvin is responding to the first six books of Pighius's 1542 work *Ten Books on Human Free Choice and Divine Grace*. Although Pighius died before Calvin finished his entire response, the controversy between Calvin and Jerome Bolsec over predestination almost ten years later (1552) would inspire Calvin to finish his response to Pighius's last four books in *De aeterna Dei praedestinatione (Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God)*.⁶⁴ By 1559 Calvin had completed his final edition of the *Institutes* and his understanding of grace and free will is again evident, but this time imbued with all the experience of his debates with Pighius.

Pervasive Depravity and the Bondage of the Will

Calvin begins with the first sin of Adam and, like Paul in Romans 5, draws the connection from Adam to all of humanity. When Adam sinned he “entangled and immersed his offspring in the same miseries.”⁶⁵ Calvin defines original sin as “a hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused into all parts of the soul, which first makes us liable to God's wrath, then also brings forth in us those works which Scripture calls ‘works

and Johannes Hericus Heideggerus. Also consider: Riissen, Maresius, Maastricht, Heidegger, Polan, Wolleb, Burmann, Crocius, Voetius, Keckermann, Bucan, Pictet, Turretin, Owen, Charnock, Flavel, and Howe. See Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics: Set Out and Illustrated from the Sources*, ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G. T. Thomson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1950), 510–42.

63. John Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defense of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighius*, ed. A. N. S. Lane, trans. G. I. Davies, Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).

64. John Calvin, *Calvin's Calvinism: Treatises on 'The Eternal Predestination of God' and 'The Secret Providence of God'*, ed. and trans. Henry Cole (London: Sovereign Grace Union, 1927).

65. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.1.1.

of the flesh.’”⁶⁶ The result of descending from Adam’s “impure seed” and being “born infected with the contagion of sin” is the pervasive corruption of man’s nature.⁶⁷ “Here I only want to suggest briefly that the whole man is overwhelmed—as by a deluge—from head to foot, so that no part is immune from sin and all that proceeds from him is to be imputed to sin. As Paul says, all turnings of the thoughts to the flesh are enmities against God [Rom. 8:7], and are therefore death [Rom. 8:6].”⁶⁸ Calvin states elsewhere, “So depraved is [man’s] nature that he can be moved or impelled only to evil.”⁶⁹ If man has been corrupted as by a deluge and if sin permeates every recess so that “no part is immune from sin” then it follows that man’s will is in bondage to sin. Calvin, against Pighius, writes, “For the will is so overwhelmed by wickedness and so pervaded by vice and corruption that it cannot in any way escape to honourable exertion or devote itself to righteousness.”⁷⁰ Consequently, Calvin, with Augustine, does not hesitate to title the will “unfree.”⁷¹ Without the Spirit the will is not free but shackled and conquered by its desires.⁷²

This does not mean, however, that man is coerced. Rather, man sins willingly, out of *necessity*, but not out of *compulsion*. Such a distinction is one of Calvin’s chief points in his treatise against Pighius, who argues that *necessitas* (necessity) implies *coactio* (coercion). However, for Calvin “it does not follow from the denial of free will that what a person chooses is the result of coercion.”⁷³ Coercion negates responsibility but *necessity* is “consistent with being held responsible for the action, and being praised or blamed for it.”⁷⁴ Therefore, Calvin can state that man

66. *Ibid.*, 2.1.8.

67. *Ibid.*, 2.1.6.

68. *Ibid.*, 2.1.9. Also see 2.2.12; 2.3.

69. *Ibid.*, 2.3.5 [1539 edition]; Anthony N. S. Lane, “Anthropology,” in *The Calvin Handbook*, 278–79.

70. Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 77.

71. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.7.

72. Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 41–42 (cf. 141–42); *idem*, *Institutes*, 2.2.7.

73. Paul Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 162. Also see Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956), 87.

74. Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 150.

“acts wickedly by will, not by compulsion” (*Male voluntate agit, non coactione*).⁷⁵

Does Calvin then affirm “free will”? If by freedom one means, as Lombard, the Papists, and Pighius argue, that man’s will in no way is determined but man has the self-power to will good or evil toward God (what is today titled libertarian freedom), so that by his own strength he can will either equally, then free will is rejected by Calvin.⁷⁶ But if by free will one means, as Augustine maintained, that man wills out of *voluntary necessity* (not coercion) then willful choice can be affirmed.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, even if man wills out of necessity, such necessity is, prior to the application of effectual grace, only a necessity to sin. “For we do not say that man is dragged unwillingly into sinning, but that because his will is corrupt he is held captive under the yoke of sin and therefore of necessity wills in an evil way. For where there is bondage, there is necessity.”⁷⁸ Therefore, the bondage of the will to sin remains, and yet, such slavery is a voluntary and willful captivity (*voluntariae suae electioni*).⁷⁹ Calvin shows how an agent can be both free and under necessity when he uses the example of the devil. The devil can only do evil all of the time, and yet, he is fully culpable for his actions and commits them voluntarily though out of necessity.⁸⁰

75. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.7; cf. 3.5; idem, *Bondage*, 68.

76. Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 311; idem, *Institutes*, 2.2.7–8.

77. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.3.5. For a defense of Calvin as a compatibilist, see Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas*, 157–83.

78. Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 69. Also see Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.3.5 [1539 edition].

79. Calvin’s statement on free will in his 1538 Catechism is one of his clearest and most precise definitions: “That man is enslaved to sin the Scriptures repeatedly testify. This means that his nature is so estranged from God’s righteousness that he conceives, desires, and strives after nothing that is not impious, distorted, evil, or impure. For a heart deeply steeped in sin’s poison can bring forth nothing but the fruits of sin. Yet we are not to suppose for that reason that man has been driven by violent necessity to sin. He transgresses out of a will utterly prone to sin. But because on account of the corruption of his feelings he utterly loathes all God’s righteousness and is inflamed to every sort of wickedness, it is denied that he is endowed with the free capacity to choose good and evil which men call ‘free will.’” John I. Hesselink, *Calvin’s First Catechism: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 9–10 (cf. 69). Also see Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.3.5.

80. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.3.5; idem, *Bondage and Liberation*, 149–50.

Special Calling and Effectual Grace

It is evident in Calvin's thought so far that grace is needed for the liberation of man's will. First, such grace comes before man's will (i.e., it is prevenient) in order to liberate him effectually from bondage rather than merely coming beside man's will to assist him.⁸¹ In other words, unlike Semi-Augustinianism and the seventeenth-century Arminianism that would come after Calvin, grace is not prevenient in the sense that it simply makes salvation a possibility if man decides to cooperate with it. Rather, the prevenient grace Calvin speaks of is effectual, so that the conversion of the elect necessarily follows. As Calvin asserts, since the human will is only evil and needs transformation and renewal to will the good, God's grace is "not merely a tool which can help someone if he is pleased to stretch out his hand to [take] it." "That is, [God] does not merely offer it, leaving [to man] the choice between receiving it and rejecting it, but he steers the mind to choose what is right, he moves the will also effectively to obedience, he arouses and advances the endeavour until the actual completion of the work is attained."⁸² Quoting Augustine, he concludes, "The human will does not obtain grace through its freedom, but rather freedom through grace."⁸³

Second, the efficacious nature of grace also reveals the particularity of God's choice. Free will is "not sufficient to enable man to do good works, unless he be helped by grace, indeed by special grace, which only the elect receive through regeneration."⁸⁴ Calvin explains, "For I do not tarry over those fanatics who babble that grace is equally and indiscriminately distributed."⁸⁵ Against Pighius, Calvin argues,

In addition this grace is not given to all without distinction or generally, but only to those whom God wills; the rest, to whom it is not given, remain evil and have absolutely no ability to attain to the good because they belong to the mass that is lost and condemned and they

81. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.12; 2.2.27; 2.3.5.

82. Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 114. Also see 173.

83. Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 130.

84. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.6.

85. *Ibid.*; also see 3.22.10.

are left to their condemnation. In addition, this grace is not of such a kind as to bestow on [its recipients] the power to act well on condition that they will to, so that they thereafter have the option of willing or not willing. But it effectively moves them to will it; indeed it makes their evil will good, so that they of necessity will well.⁸⁶

Therefore, Calvin would certainly have rejected what later Arminians would have meant in affirming a universal, prevenient grace. Rather, God's special grace is discriminate, particular, and efficacious.

Third, man's cooperation is excluded entirely from the process. Biblical support for this can be found in passages like Ezekiel 36, where God removes the heart of stone and implants a heart of flesh, causing the dead sinner to walk in new life, and Ephesians 2, where God works alone to bring about the "second creation" uniting us to Christ.⁸⁷ Salvation is a free gift; "if even the least ability came from ourselves, we would also have some share of the merit."⁸⁸ Quoting Psalm 100:3 ("And we ourselves have not done it") Calvin remarks, "Moreover, we see how, not simply content to have given God due praise for our salvation, he expressly excludes us from all participation in it. It is as if he were saying that not a whit remains to man to glory in, for the whole of salvation comes from God."⁸⁹

However, Calvin anticipates an objection: "But perhaps some will concede that the will is turned away from the good by its own nature and is converted by the Lord's power alone, yet in such a way that, having been prepared, it then has its own part in the action."⁹⁰ Such an objection comes from the Semi-Augustinian view, arguing that while God initiates grace and prepares the will for subsequent acts of grace, ultimately man must do his own part for such grace to be finally successful. But Calvin answers that the very activity of the will to exercise faith is a free gift from God, eliminating any possible participation of man's

86. Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 136.

87. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.3.6.

88. *Ibid.*

89. *Ibid.*

90. *Ibid.*, 2.3.7.

will. Therefore, it follows that “when we, who are by nature inclined to evil with our whole heart, begin to will good, we do so out of mere grace.”⁹¹ After expositing Ezekiel 36:26 and Jeremiah 32:39–40, Calvin concludes, “For it always follows that nothing good can arise out of our will until it has been reformed; and after its reformation, in so far as it is good, it is so from God, not from ourselves.”⁹²

He [God] does not move the will in such a manner as has been taught and believed for many ages—that it is afterward in our choice *either to obey or resist the motion—but by disposing it efficaciously*. Therefore one must deny that oft-repeated statement of Chrysostom: “Whom he draws he draws willing.” By this he signifies that the Lord is only extending his hand to await whether we will be pleased to receive his aid.⁹³

Fourth, reflecting on the divine “calling” in Matthew 22:14, as well as Isaiah 54:13 (cf. John 6:44–45), Calvin observes the distinction between a general and effectual call.⁹⁴ “The Gospel is preached indiscriminately to the elect and the reprobate; but the elect alone come to Christ, because they have been ‘taught by God,’ and therefore to them the Prophet undoubtedly refers.”⁹⁵ Commenting on the “efficacy of the Spirit,” Calvin concludes, “Besides, we are taught by this passage [Isa. 54:13] that the calling of God is efficacious in the elect.”⁹⁶ Likewise, in his commentary on John 6:44 Calvin first explains that though the gospel is preached to all, all do not embrace it for a “new understanding and a new perception are requisite.”⁹⁷ Calvin goes on to explain that such a drawing does not consist in a mere external voice but is the secret operation of the Holy Spirit, whereby God inwardly teaches through

91. *Ibid.*, 2.3.8.

92. *Ibid.*, 2.3.8–9.

93. Emphasis added. *Ibid.*, 2.3.10; also see 3.24.1–2; Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 174.

94. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.24.8.

95. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah 33–66*, trans. and ed. William Pringle, vol. 8 of *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 146.

96. *Ibid.*, 146–47.

97. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John 1–11*, trans. and ed. William Pringle, in vol. 17 of *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 257.

the illumination of the heart. Calvin reveals his monergism when he concludes that men are not fit for believing until they have been drawn, and such a drawing by the grace of Christ is “efficacious, so that they necessarily believe.”⁹⁸

Sola Gratia and Soli Deo Gloria

Why is such a debate so crucial for Calvin? For him the glory of God is at stake in how one understands grace. Hesselink observes, “If that grace is undercut by some form of cooperation (synergism) between a semiautonomous ‘free’ human being and the sovereign Lord, the glory of God is compromised, as far as Calvin is concerned.”⁹⁹ Such a compromise of God’s glory was, for Calvin, not only unbiblical but also an assault to God himself. No one has articulated the Reformers’ affirmation of monergism as well as J. I. Packer when he writes,

Historically, it is simply a matter of fact that Martin Luther and John Calvin, and, for that matter, Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer, and all the leading Protestant theologians of the first epoch of the Reformation, stood on precisely the same ground here. On other points, they had their differences; but in asserting the helplessness of man in sin, and the sovereignty of God in grace, they were entirely at one. To all of them, these doctrines were the very life-blood of the Christian faith. . . . The doctrine of free justification by faith only, which became the storm-centre of so much controversy during the Reformation period, is often regarded as the heart of the Reformers’ theology, but this is hardly accurate. The truth is that their thinking was really centered upon the contention of Paul, echoed with varying degrees of adequacy by Augustine, and Gottschalk, and Bradwardine, and Wycliffe, that the sinner’s entire salvation is by free and sovereign grace only. The doctrine of justification by faith was important to them because it safeguarded the principle of

98. Calvin, *John*, 256 (cf. 258–59). Also see Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 176, 188.

99. Hesselink, *Calvin’s First Catechism*, 72. Also see Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 145–73; Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield, *Calvin as a Theologian and Calvinism Today* (Grand Rapids: Evangelical, 1969), 26.

sovereign grace; but it actually expressed for them only one aspect of this principle, and that not its deepest aspect. The sovereignty of grace found expression in their thinking at a profounder level still, in the doctrine of *monergistic regeneration*—the doctrine, that is, that the faith which receives Christ for justification is itself the free gift of a sovereign God, bestowed by spiritual regeneration in the act of effectual calling. To the Reformers, the crucial question was not simply, whether God justifies believers without works of law. It was the broader question, whether sinners are wholly helpless in their sin, and whether God is to be thought of as saving them by free, unconditional, invincible grace, not only justifying them for Christ’s sake when they come to faith, but also raising them from the death of sin by His quickening Spirit in order to bring them to faith. Here was the crucial issue: whether God is the author, not merely of justification, but also of faith; whether, in the last analysis, Christianity is a religion of utter reliance on God for salvation and all things necessary to it, or of self-reliance and self-effort.¹⁰⁰

THE SYNOD OF DORT

Calvin would not be without a following as his view of grace would be defended by a host of Calvinists, including successors like Theodore Beza (1519–1605), William Perkins (1558–1602), and eventually Francis Turretin (1623–87). However, it is in the seventeenth century, with the uprising of Jacob Arminius and the Remonstrants, that Calvinism would find its greatest challenge, eventually rousing a response from the Synod of Dort (1618–19).

100. Packer, “Historical and Theological Introduction,” 58–59, emphasis added. To clarify, Calvin did not always use the word “regeneration” in the narrow sense that some of his contemporaries did and as later Calvinists would (i.e., the inception of spiritual life; the new birth), but rather used it in the broad sense synonymous with sanctification. François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Developments of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 242. However, though theological labels may differ, Calvin, other Reformers, and later Calvinists understood the *content* and *concept* of sovereign grace the same. For a comparison of Calvin with other Reformers and later Calvinists, see Kenneth Stewart, “The Doctrine of Regeneration in Evangelical Theology: The Reformation to 1800,” *JBTM* 8, 1 (2011): 42–57.

Jacob Arminius

Arminianism bears the name of Jacob Arminius (1559–1609).¹⁰¹ In 1582, at age twenty-two, Arminius moved to Geneva to attend the Geneva Academy under the teaching of Beza, Calvin’s epigone and successor. However, it would become clear after Arminius left Geneva to pastor in Amsterdam from 1587 to 1603 that he would advocate a synergistic view of grace. In 1603 Arminius accepted a professorate at the University of Leiden and, while he would face opposition from many Calvinists, his most aggressive opponent was Franciscus Gomarus (1563–1641), a student of Beza, Whitaker, and Ursinus. Gomarus, believing Arminius’s theology to be in agreement with the Jesuits and Pelagians, was not alone when he declared that Arminius violated the Belgic Confession (1561) and the Heidelberg Catechism (1563). Moreover, as Gerrit Jan Hoenderdaal observes, Arminius, along with his friend Johannes Uitenbogaert (1557–1644), “joined in wanting the [Belgic] Confession and the [Heidelberg] Catechism to be ‘revisable and reformable.’”¹⁰² Despite the claims of some historians that Arminius was part of the Reformed tradition, Richard Muller has successfully demonstrated that the synergism of Arminius was, in the eyes of seventeenth-century Reformers, an obvious violation of the Reformed confessions for “the basic doctrinal position advanced both in the Confession and in the synods was anti-synergistic, namely, monergistic.”¹⁰³

101. For resources on the life and theology of Arminius on which I am dependent, see chapter 5 and the bibliography. But especially see Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985); Richard A. Muller, *God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius: Sources and Directions of Scholastic Protestantism in the Era of Early Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991); Keith D. Stanglin and Thomas H. McCall, *Jacob Arminius: Theologian of Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); William den Boer, *God’s Twofold Love: The Theology of Jacob Arminius (1559–1609)*, trans. Albert Gootjes, vol. 14 in *Reformed Historical Theology*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2010).

102. Gerrit Jan Hoenderdaal, “The Life and Struggle of Arminius in the Dutch Republic,” in *Man’s Faith and Freedom: The Theological Influence of Jacobus Arminius*, ed. Gerald O. McCulloh (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 15.

103. Richard A. Muller, “Arminius and the Reformed Tradition,” *WTJ* 70 (2008): 31–47. Also see idem, *God, Creation, and Providence*, 42; Louis Praamsma, “Background of Arminian

One year before Arminius's death, his departure from the Reformed confessions would become even more explicit in his *Declaration of Sentiments* (1608; presented before the Calvinistic Estates General of Holland), which included a clear affirmation of synergism as well as a refutation of Calvinism's decretal theology. For Arminius, while it is necessary for God to provide a prevenient grace that mitigates man's pervasive depravity and enables belief, God's saving act to finally convert and regenerate the sinner is conditioned upon the free choice of man to accept or reject grace.¹⁰⁴ Such a synergistic view shared many similarities with the synergism of medieval theologian Gabriel Biel, which only fueled the charge, even if it be an inaccurate one, that Arminius was advocating Semi-Pelagianism (see chapter 5).

The Arminian Remonstrants

Though Arminius died in 1609, his synergism filled many churches in Amsterdam so that by 1610 there were many Arminian pastors. Perhaps two of his most important successors were Conrad Vorstius (1569–1622), opposed by King James himself, and Simon Episcopius (1583–1643), both of whom succeeded Arminius at the University of Leiden.¹⁰⁵ As unrest continued, forty-six Arminians, led by Johannes Uitenbogaert and Episcopius, gathered in Gouda in 1610 to write a *Remonstrance* against the Calvinists, which included five canons articulating their beliefs. The confession is consistent with the writings of Arminius, teaching that God's election is conditioned upon foreseen faith, Christ's atonement is universal in scope, and grace is resistible.¹⁰⁶ As for Arminius, so for the

Controversy," in *Crisis in the Reformed Churches: Essays in Commemoration of the Great Synod of Dort, 1618–1619*, ed. Peter Y. De Jong (Grand Rapids: Reformed Fellowship, 1968), 28–29.

104. See James Arminius, "Certain Articles to be Diligently Examined and Weighed," in *The Writings of James Arminius*, 3 vols., trans. James Nichols and William Nichols (Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956), 2:492–501; idem, "Declaration of Sentiments," in *Writings*, 1:230–31; 252–53; idem, "Apology against Thirty-One Theological Articles," in *Writings*, 1:276–380 (especially 328, 364–73).

105. My exposition of the Remonstrant doctrine and Dort's response is brief, but see Herman Bavinck, *Saved by Grace: The Holy Spirit's Work in Calling and Regeneration*, ed. J. Mark Beach, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2008), 19–53.

106. Jan Rohls, "Calvinism, Arminianism and Socinianism in the Netherlands until the Synod of Dort," in *Socinianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists and Cultural*

Remonstrants grace is not effectual, irresistible, causal, or monergistic, but only persuasive so that man's free will is able ultimately to determine whether or not to cooperate with God's grace (see chapter 5).

Prompted by the Calvinist Prince Maurice of Orange, six representatives of each side met in the Hague (the *Collatio Hagiensis*) in 1611 to discuss their differences, but the meeting was of no success. By 1618 a Counter Remonstrance was formed by the Calvinists in Dordrecht, presided over by Johannes Bogerman (1576–1637), which sought not only to correct the Arminian caricatures of the Calvinist position and refute the Remonstrant position, but also to set forth the “biblical” view.¹⁰⁷ In so doing, Dort showed, as Muller notes, that the

Arminian doctrines were clearly beyond the bounds of Reformed confessional orthodoxy. . . . The Canons of Dort ought to be viewed as a magisterial interpretation of the extant Reformed confessional synthesis: they condemn predestination grounded on prior human choice; they deny a grace that is both resistible and acceptable by

Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Europe, ed. Martin Mulrow and Jan Rohls, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 134 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 19. Bavinck makes an important clarification: “The term ‘irresistible grace’ is not really of Reformed origin but was used by Jesuits and Remonstrants to characterize the doctrine of the efficacy of grace as it was advocated by Augustine and those who believed as he did. The Reformed in fact had some objections to the term because it was absolutely not their intent to deny that grace is often and indeed always resisted by the unregenerate person and therefore could be resisted. They therefore preferred to speak of the efficacy or of the insuperability of grace, or interpreted the term ‘irresistible’ in the sense that grace is ultimately irresistible. The point of the disagreement, accordingly, was not whether humans continually resisted and could resist God's grace, but whether they could ultimately—at the specific moment in which God wanted to regenerate them and work with his efficacious grace in their heart—still reject that grace.” Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: 2008), 4:83.

107. Before the delegates of Dort pronounced their verdict they requested that the Remonstrants, led by Episcopius, set forth their views with greater detail than they had in the *Five Articles* originally presented. The Remonstrants wrote a confession of their beliefs that more fully presented their views which came to be called the *Sententiae Remonstrantium* (the *Opinions of the Remonstrants*). For the entirety of the *Sententiae Remonstrantium*, see Appendix H in De Jong, *Crisis in the Reformed Churches*, 229. When Dort pronounced its verdict, condemning the Remonstrant views as outside the bounds of the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism and, most importantly, in conflict with Scripture itself, the pronouncement was based upon the *Five Articles* and the *Sententiae Remonstrantium*. See the bibliography for resources on the history of Dort.

man; they affirm the depth of original sin, argue a limited efficiency of Christ's work of satisfaction and stress the perseverance of the elect by grace. None of these views modifies the earlier Reformed position—indeed, virtually all of these points can be elicited from Ursinus's exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism.¹⁰⁸

The focus of Dort is on the major difference between the two parties: conditionality versus unconditionality in salvation. Dort is clear: no aspect of God's eternal choice is conditioned upon man's free will for its efficacy or success.¹⁰⁹

The Canons of Dort

Dort begins by describing the pervasiveness of depravity. Man has inherited from Adam a corrupt nature so that after the fall every man is a slave to sin.¹¹⁰ In the first three articles of canons 3 and 4 it is evident that Dort affirms that (1) man's depravity pervades every aspect of his being (will, mind, affections); (2) man is dead, a slave to his sinful nature; and (3) man is in no way willing to return to God or reform his distorted nature.¹¹¹ He is in total reliance upon the saving power of God.¹¹²

Despite man's ruin, God has graciously provided a gospel call for all people.¹¹³ And this gospel call is a well-meant offer. Those who are called by the gospel are called "seriously." Here Dort is responding to the objection of the Remonstrants, who argued in their *Sententiae Remonstrantium* that the Calvinist God was hypocritical to call all people by his

108. Richard A. Muller, "Arminius and Arminianism," in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, ed. Trevor A. Hart (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 35.

109. Fred H. Klooster, "Doctrinal Deliverances of Dort," in De Jong, *Crisis in the Reformed Churches*, 52–57 (cf. 174); John R. De Witt, "The Arminian Conflict," in *Puritan Papers*, vol. 5, 1968–1969, ed. J. I. Packer (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 20; Peterson and Williams, *Why I Am Not an Arminian*, 122.

110. "The Canons of the Synod of Dort," in *Creeds and Confessions of the Reformation Era*, vol. 2 of *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie R. Hotchkiss (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 3–4.1. Also see 3–4.2; 3–4, rejections 1–2 and 3–4.3.

111. *Ibid.*, 3–4, rejections 3–4.

112. *Ibid.*, 3–4.4; 3–4.5; 3–4.6.

113. *Ibid.*, 3–4.8.

gospel when he would effectually save only his elect.¹¹⁴ Dort rejects such a charge. Scripture is clear: God does indeed call all externally, though according to his decretive will he only chooses to convert internally his elect. God is in no way hypocritical for he only holds out to the sinner that which he could have (eternal life) if he would believe. However, the sinner not only cannot believe but he will not believe. Therefore, as Dort argues in article 9, the fact that the sinner does not believe is nobody's fault but his own.¹¹⁵

However, when a sinner does hear the gospel and believes, God and God alone receives all of the credit for he is the one who first gave the sinner new life to believe.

[Article 10] The fact that others who are called through the ministry of the gospel do come and are brought to conversion must not be credited to man, as though one distinguishes himself by free choice from others who are furnished with equal or sufficient grace for faith and conversion (as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains). No, it must be credited to God: just as from eternity he chose his own in Christ, so within time he effectually calls them, grants them faith and repentance, and, having rescued them from the dominion of darkness, brings them into the kingdom of his Son [Col 1:13], in order that they may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called them out of darkness into this marvelous light [1 Peter 2:9], and may boast not in themselves, but in the Lord, as apostolic words frequently testify in Scripture [1 Cor. 1:31].¹¹⁶

For the sinner to believe God must irresistibly and effectually, by the power of the Spirit, call that elect sinner to himself and awaken him to new life.

[Article 11] Moreover, when God carries out this good pleasure in his chosen ones, or works true conversion in them, he not only sees to it that the gospel is proclaimed to them outwardly, and enlightens

114. "Appendix H: The Opinions of the Remonstrants," in De Jong, *Crisis in the Reformed Churches*, 226–27.

115. "The Canons of the Synod of Dort," 3–4.9.

116. *Ibid.*, 3–4.10.

their minds powerfully by the Holy Spirit so that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God, but, by the effective operation of the same regenerating Spirit, he also penetrates into the inmost being of man, opens the closed heart, softens the hard heart, and circumcises the heart that is uncircumcised. He infuses new qualities¹¹⁷ into the will, making the dead will alive, the evil one good, the unwilling one willing, and the stubborn one compliant; he activates and strengthens the will so that, like a good tree, it may be enabled to produce the fruits of good deeds.¹¹⁸

No mere moral persuasion will do, but unfailing resurrection to spiritual life is necessary.

[Article 12] And this is the regeneration, the new creation, the raising from the dead, and the making alive so clearly proclaimed in the Scriptures, which God works in us without our help. But this certainly does not happen only by outward teaching, by moral persuasion, or by such a way of working that, after God has done his work, it remains in man's power whether or not to be reborn or converted. Rather, it is an entirely supernatural work, one that is at the same time most powerful and most pleasing, a marvelous, hidden, and inexpressible work, which is not lesser than or inferior in power to that of creation or of raising the dead, as Scripture (inspired by the author of this work) teaches. As a result, all those in whose hearts God works in this marvelous way are certainly, unfailingly, and effectually reborn and do actually believe. And then the will, now renewed, is not only activated and motivated by God but in being activated by God is also itself active. For this reason, man himself, by that grace which he has received, is also rightly said to believe and to repent.¹¹⁹

117. Horton argues that this infusion of new qualities is “not a medieval notion of infused habits, but simply a manner of expressing the impartation of new life from a source external to the person who is ‘dead in sins.’ . . . [regeneration] is not represented here as accomplished apart from or prior to the external preaching of the gospel.” Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 203n83.

118. “The Canons of the Synod of Dort,” 3–4.11.

119. *Ibid.*, 3–4.12.

Perhaps no confession since Dort has spent so much space articulating the monergistic nature of grace. In article 12, Dort is unambiguous: God works regeneration before any act of faith on our part and apart from our help. Such a work of God, not upon all but only upon his elect, is irresistible, effectual, and always successful, bringing the sinner from death to new life.¹²⁰ As Ezekiel 36:26 demonstrates, God's work is not by mere moral persuasion nor is it conditioned upon "man's power whether or not to be reborn or converted."¹²¹ Rather, it is a work equivalent to raising the dead. Indeed, God's act of rebirth is always certain, unfailing, and effective, so that those whom God chooses to specially call and regenerate "do actually believe." Appealing to Ephesians 1:19; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; and 2 Peter 1:3, Dort's rejection of synergism is also evident in Rejection 8 of the Canons.

Having set forth the orthodox teaching, the synod rejects the errors of those . . . 8. Who teach that God in regenerating man does not bring to bear that power of his omnipotence whereby he may powerfully and unfailingly bend man's will to faith and conversion, but that even when God has accomplished all the works of grace which he uses for man's conversion, man nevertheless can, and in actual fact often does, so resist God and the Spirit in their intent and will to regenerate him, that man completely thwarts his own rebirth; and, indeed, that it remains in his own power whether or not to be reborn. For this does away with all effective functioning of God's grace in our conversion and subjects the activity of Almighty God to the will of man; it is contrary to the apostles, who teach that we believe by virtue of the effective working of God's mighty strength, and that God fulfills the undeserved good will of his kindness and the work of faith in us with power, and likewise that his divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness.¹²²

120. Dort rejects a universal grace that is contingent upon the will of man, citing Ps. 147:19–20; Acts 14:16; and Acts 16:6–7 in support. See *ibid.*, 3–4, rejection 5.

121. *Ibid.*, 3–4, rejection 7.

122. Also see *ibid.*, 3–4, rejection 9.

Notice the emphasis Dort places on making sure it is God, not man, who receives all of the credit and glory (1 Cor. 1:31). To reverse the order is to rob God of his glory and give man a ground to boast upon.

Furthermore, if man's faith is the result of God's effectual call and regenerative work, then it also follows that faith itself is a gift. However, Dort is very careful to avoid an Arminian definition of faith. Having Jeremiah 31:18, 33; Isaiah 44:3; and Romans 5:5 in mind, article 14 states,

In this way, therefore, faith is a gift of God, not in the sense that it is offered by God for man to choose, but that it is in actual fact bestowed on man, breathed and infused into him. Nor is it a gift in the sense that God bestows only the potential to believe, but then awaits assent—the act of believing—from man's choice; rather, it is a gift in the sense that he who works both willing and acting and, indeed, works all things in all people produces in man both the will to believe and the belief itself.¹²³

In other words, the Arminian defines faith in such a way that it is a gift, but only in the sense that it is offered so that whether or not it becomes actual is man's choice, not God's. To the contrary, Dort argues, faith is a gift that God wills to implant within the dead, lifeless sinner so that upon the granting of that new life he believes necessarily. As Dort states, God produces “in man both the will to believe and the belief itself.”¹²⁴ Peter Toon correctly concludes that, on the basis of article 14, Dort taught “that regeneration precedes faith and is the cause of faith.”¹²⁵

Dort, however, is aware of two objections. First, the Arminian objects that if it is only God who can do this effectual and irresistible work so that without it no man can believe, then God is unjust and unfair to limit his saving work to only some rather than all. But Dort responds to this objection in the tradition of the apostle Paul in Romans 9: “God does not owe this grace to anyone. For what could God owe

123. “The Canons of the Synod of Dort,” 3–4.14. Also see *ibid.*, 3–4, rejection 6.

124. *Ibid.*, 3–4.14.

125. Peter Toon, *Born Again: A Biblical and Theological Study of Regeneration* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 123.

to one who has nothing to give that can be paid back? Indeed, what could God owe to one who has nothing of his own to give but sin and falsehood?”¹²⁶

Second, the Remonstrants also objected that if grace is irresistible, not just providing the opportunity to believe but also actually providing the will to believe, then man is reduced to a block or stone, stripped of his personal agency. Dort responds,

However, just as by the fall man did not cease to be man, endowed with intellect and will, and just as sin, which has spread through the whole human race, did not abolish the nature of the human race but distorted and spiritually killed it, so also this divine grace of regeneration does not act in people as if they were blocks and stones; nor does it abolish the will and its properties or coerce a reluctant will by force, but spiritually revives, heals, reforms, and—in a manner at once pleasing and powerful—bends it back. As a result, a ready and sincere obedience of the Spirit now begins to prevail where before the rebellion and resistance of the flesh were completely dominant. It is in this that the true spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consists. Thus, if the marvelous Maker of every good thing were not dealing with us, man would have no hope of getting up from his fall by his free choice, by which he plunged himself into ruin when still standing upright.¹²⁷

The grace of regeneration works upon the will not to abolish it or coerce it, but rather in a way that revives, heals, and reforms it, bending it back to love God rather than sin. Notice exactly how God revives, heals, reforms, and bends the will; it is in a “manner at once pleasing and powerful.” It is pleasing because man is a sinner, deserving only wrath. It is powerful in that God does not leave salvation up to man’s will but brings him into union with Christ without fail, accomplishing the redemption God intended.¹²⁸

126. “The Canons of the Synod of Dort,” 3–4.15.

127. *Ibid.*, 3–4.16.

128. Turretin also identified effectual grace as a display of divine sweetness and omnipotence. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr., trans. George

Synergism would continue to characterize Arminianism as it spread in the decades after Dort.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, Dort's emphasis on sovereign grace would be reiterated at the Westminster Assembly (1643–49). As Robert Norris observes, “the decisions of the Synod of Dort were of great import to the Assembly” and Dort “was the most significant of the recent Reformed synods.”¹³⁰ Therefore, as Arminianism spread throughout England, it was no surprise that the Assembly believed it to be a great threat.

Westminster on Depravity and Free Will

Like Dort, Westminster affirmed original sin and the pervasive depravity of man. In chapter 6, “Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment Thereof,” the Westminster Confession of Faith states that guilt and corruption from Adam has been imputed to all mankind.¹³¹ By Adam's sin man has fallen from his original righteousness and communion with God and has therefore become dead in sin, “wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.”¹³² It is from the original corruption man has inherited that all of his actual sins proceed, which only compound man's guilt and condemnation before a holy God.¹³³

The implications of man's depravity are massive for free will. Chapter 9 of the Confession, “Of Free Will,” states that God created Adam with a “natural liberty” so that his choices were not forced nor was he under “any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil.”¹³⁴ “Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which

Musgrave Giger, 3 vols., (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992–97), 2:521, 524–25.

129. E.g., shortly after Dort, Episcopius took on a lead role in drafting a confession, which was published in 1621 as the *Confession or Declaration of the Remonstrant Pastors*.

130. Robert M. Norris, “The Thirty-Nine Articles at the Westminster Assembly,” in *The Westminster Confession into the Twenty-first Century: Essays in Remembrance of the 350th Anniversary of the Westminster Assembly*, ed. J. Ligon Duncan III (Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2009), 3:161.

131. “The Westminster Confession,” in Pelikan and Hotchkiss, *Creeds and Confessions of the Reformation Era*, 6.3.

132. *Ibid.*, 6.2.

133. *Ibid.*, 6.6.

134. *Ibid.*, 9.1.

is good and well-pleasing to God; but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it.”¹³⁵ However, after the fall man’s will is in bondage to sin. “Man, by his Fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.”¹³⁶ Therefore,

When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and, by his grace alone, enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so as that by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly, nor only, will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil.¹³⁷

Man’s only hope is for God to free him from this bondage to sin by a supernatural grace.

Westminster on Effectual Calling

Westminster appropriately moves from man’s willful bondage to sin and need for God’s grace to the doctrine of effectual calling and regeneration in chapter 10.¹³⁸

1. All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased in his appointed and accepted time effectually to call [Rom. 8:30; 11:7; Eph. 1:10, 11], by his Word and Spirit [2 Thess. 2:13–14; 2 Cor. 3:3, 6], out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ [Rom. 8:2; Eph. 2:1–5; 2 Tim. 1:9–10]: enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God [Acts 26:18; 1 Cor. 2:10; 12; Eph. 1:17–18], taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh [Ezek. 36:26]; renewing their wills, and, by

135. Ibid., 9.2.

136. Ibid., 9.3.

137. Ibid., 9.4. Also see 9.5.

138. Also see the “Westminster Shorter Catechism,” in Pelikan and Hotchkiss, *Creeeds and Confessions of the Reformation Era*, Q. 31.

his almighty power determining them to that which is good [Ezek. 11:19; Phil. 2:13; Deut. 20:6; Ezek. 36:27], and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ [Eph. 1:19; John 6:44–45]; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace [Song of Songs 1:4; Ps. 110:3; John 6:37; Rom. 6:16–18].

2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man [2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:4–5; Eph. 2:4–5, 8–9; Rom. 9:11], who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit [1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:7; Eph. 2:5], he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it [John 6:37; Ezek. 36:27; John 5:25].¹³⁹

Several observations must be noted. First, chapter 10 begins by stating that only those whom God has predestined for life are effectually called and regenerated, contrary to the Arminian view which only sees God's calling as universal. Second, God effectually calls and regenerates dead sinners to new life by his Word and Spirit and by the grace of his Son Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁰ Here Westminster draws from the biblical metaphors by stating that the Spirit enlightens the mind to understand (Eph. 1:17–18), takes away the heart of stone and replaces it with a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26), renews the will, and effectually draws the sinner to Jesus Christ (John 6:44–45).¹⁴¹ Yet, though the Spirit's drawing is effectual, nevertheless, man comes most freely, "being made willing by his grace." The will, therefore, is renewed and made willing to believe.

Moreover, notice the order in which Westminster places God's grace in reference to man's faith. In 10.2 Westminster states that the effectual call is purely of God's grace so that man is absolutely passive. It is only when the sinner has been "quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it." In other words, man's answer

139. "The Westminster Confession," 10.1–2. Also see 10.4.

140. Also see "Westminster Shorter Catechism," Q. 30.

141. O. Palmer Robertson, "The Holy Spirit in the Westminster Confession of Faith," in *The Westminster Confession into the Twenty-first Century*, 1:68.

to the call only comes after the Spirit has “quicken and renewed” and not before.¹⁴²

Westminster’s understanding of grace—which was restated by John Owen and Thomas Goodwin’s Savoy Declaration (1658) and the Second London Confession (1677, 1689) of the Particular Baptists—once again demonstrates, as was the case with Augustine, Calvin, and Dort, that it is God’s grace which must precede any activity (faith included) on the part of the dead sinner. Until God effectually calls and regenerates the sinner, no faith will be present. To reverse this order would be to exalt man’s will over God’s grace. Therefore, A. H. Pask is right when he observes that one of the main reasons the Puritans in England detested Arminianism so much was because it “inclines men to pride” by allowing “man’s participation in the work of his salvation.”¹⁴³

CONCLUSION

E. Brooks Holifield is unquestionably correct when he states, “The defining mark of Reformed theology was its regard for the glory of God, which entailed a pronounced insistence on divine sovereignty.”¹⁴⁴ This chapter has shown how Calvinists have defined and defended monergism as a necessary ingredient to the sovereignty of divine grace which alone can preserve God’s glory. What then is the implication for evangelicals today? Michael Horton answers that Arminian and Wesleyan synergism can no longer be an option for Protestants committed to the Reformation.

[T]hose who are convinced that the Reformation was essentially on the mark are not given the luxury of not taking a stand on . . . the monergistic work of the Holy Spirit granting new life. Therefore, if

142. The priority of the effectual call to faith is also evident in “The Westminster Confession,” 14.1.

143. A. H. S. Pask, “The Influence of Arminius Upon the Theology of John Wesley,” (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1940), 105. For a treatment of Calvinism in Puritanism as a whole, see Dewey D. Wallace Jr., *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology, 1525–1695* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), 290–352.

144. E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought From the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 11.

we are really convinced of the justice in the Reformation's critique of medieval Rome, we can no longer fail to regard Arminianism within Protestant circles as any more acceptable. It is not only Rome, but the Wesleyan system, . . . which must be equally rejected to the extent that each fails to sufficiently honor God's grace.¹⁴⁵

Reformation monergism is much more (though not less) than simply affirming that God is the sole author of salvation. God's sole authorship also means that grace for the elect is efficient and irresistible as seen in the doctrines of effectual calling and regeneration to which we will turn in chapters 5 and 6.

145. Michael S. Horton, "The *Sola's* of the Reformation," in *Here We Stand! A Call from Confessing Evangelicals for a Modern Reformation*, ed. James Montgomery Boice and Benjamin E. Sasse (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1996), 120.

IS SALVATION A WORK OF MAN, OR A WORK OF GOD,
OR SOMETHING IN BETWEEN?

In *Salvation by Grace*, Matthew Barrett comprehensively defends the doctrine of monergism (the teaching that regeneration is exclusively the work of God) primarily by looking at Scripture but also by examining Reformed theologians and confessions. Barrett also provides a helpful evaluation of both the Arminian position and contemporary attempts to chart a middle course between Calvinistic and Arminian systems.

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