

By Clark Campbell
Special thanks to Derrick Stokes,
Paul Grodell, and Ian Eckard
Veritatem Cum Mica Salis

If you toss a coin on the ground one time,
which side is it least likely to land on?

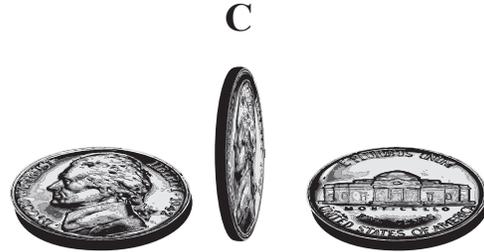
A



B

The debate between Calvinism and Arminianism is a lot like the coin-flipping question. The answer to the question is option C (the 3rd side of the coin). Most people don't even consider this to be a possibility even though it was right under their noses from the very beginning. All it really takes to understand is to look at the options from a different angle. Both A and B are part of the same coin after all, so why can't they both be possible, especially when the coin here represents God?*

*It is very important to note that I do not support Universalism in any way. A Universalist tries to add or take away from what the Bible teaches, Option c only states that God is more complex than we can understand, especially when it comes to human will. This paper is more focused on the "why", for an example of the "how" read Option c: The Time-Salvation Paradox.



The purpose of this paper is to unite. I'm not saying I'm sure that what I will be suggesting is 100% accurate, because God is infinitely complex and I am only human, so I openly concede that I may be wrong (Even though I feel the evidence for what I am about to present is strong). I would, however, like to point out that John Calvin (1509-1564), who gave his name to Calvinism and Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), who gave his name to Arminianism were also only human, so what I am suggesting is that maybe neither of their views were 100% accurate.

There are a lot of Christians who agree with Calvinism while there are many who agree with Arminianism. Maybe you yourself completely agree with one view. Is this a bad thing? I don't think so, as long as your heart is in the right place, you don't take your view beyond what is Biblical and you don't let your differences cause division. It is, however, important to note that taking a stance that is too strong for either Calvinism or Arminianism has the potential to effect more than just the area of salvation; it can alter your effectiveness in areas of evangelism and apologetics, limit how you view and receive God's healing, or can just flat out put limitations on how you view God.

Maybe you never really thought about the subject. Maybe you're one of the many Christians who agree with some of the points of Calvinism and some of the points of Arminianism? Well, if you fall somewhere in the middle for one reason or another, you may find this paper easy to grasp, at least that's my prayer. So let's get started.

Do you agree with any of the following statements?

If you don't know Jesus as your Savior, then odds are He probably didn't die for you.

God created most men for the soul purpose of spending eternity in Hell without any hope or chance of eternal life.

Man has the power to resist God.

The Holy Spirit does everything He can to bring every sinner to salvation but He often fails to do so.

The first two statements are products of a Calvinistic point of view, the last two are of the Arminian.

See Reference Guide on last page →



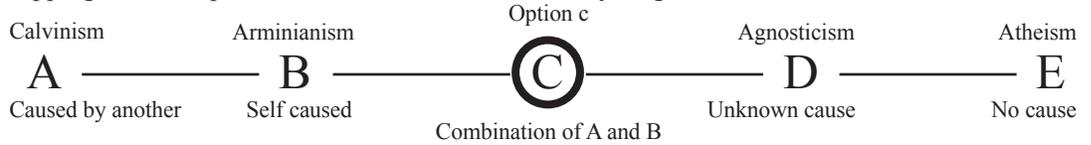
I personally don't believe any of the four are Biblical statements, so it seems clear there is a problem. I invite you to take the time to read on, being open to the Holy Spirit's moving. If you still feel that either Calvinism or Arminianism is Biblical afterwards, then that's fine, I'm not saying that's wrong per se. What I am saying is that as Christians, I'm sure we can all agree that God is so much more complex then we could ever hope to understand and that is my main point in writing this paper. So whatever your view may be in the end, let it bring the most glory to God.

Spectrum of Human Will

fig. 1

Note: There are other possibilities but they are similar to what has been presented. One example - Naturalistic Determinism.

Stepping Back, a Spectrum of Human Will from Every Angle:



These are the prominent possibilities for human will. This is a study, not to disprove Atheism or Agnosticism, but to try and show what the Bible teaches about human will, so options D and E will be eliminated. (It should be noted that options D and E are not valid or even logical options but they are non-Biblical options)

fig. 2

Calvinism and Arminianism are not polar opposites in that they oppose each other, they only lay on opposite ends of the same spectrum.

Biblical Spectrum of Human Will:



From left to right Option c sets somewhere in the middle. For purposes yet to be stated we will extend the scale on both ends.

fig. 3

The definition of "Hyper" in Hyper-Calvinism and Hyper-Arminianism for the purpose of this paper is: To take the said view beyond what is Biblical.

Extended Biblical Spectrum of Human Will:

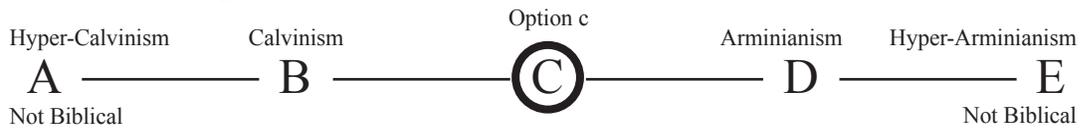
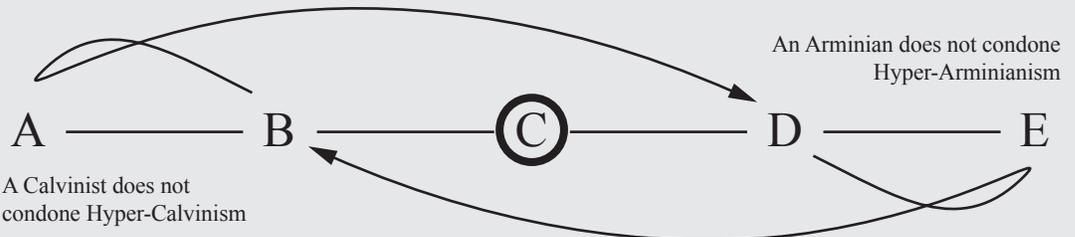


fig. 4

The Bible does seem to support both Calvinism and Arminianism after all, which is why the debate has been going on for hundreds of years.

Calvinists and Arminians both have convincing arguments to support their views but the truth is found on the common ground. See fig. 5

Extended Biblical Spectrum of Human Will, Refuting the Non-Biblical:

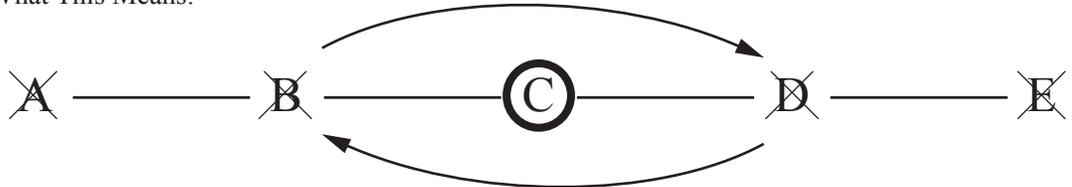


When answered completely and honestly, for B to refute A points to D and for D to refute E points to B. Examples: Calvinist - we are called to spread the gospel because no one can get to Heaven without personally professing Christ as their Savior. Arminian - nothing anyone does can get them to Heaven because only God can save us.

fig. 5

If you're saying to yourself "This can't be true because aspects of B are not Biblical" or "This can't be true because aspects of D are not Biblical" see fig. 6

What This Means:

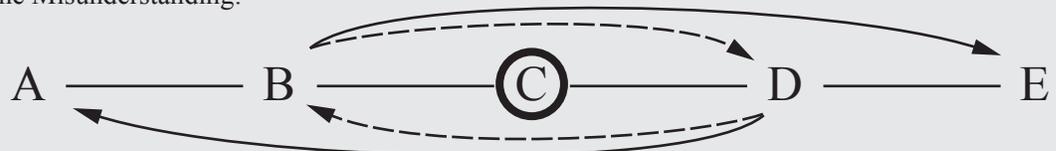


If B points to D and D points to B then C is true since C is both B and D. It can be concluded that B and D can be eliminated as separate options since they compliment and depend on each other. Also, since options A and E are not Biblical, option c stands alone.

fig. 6

This misunderstanding happens because there's an overlap between A and B as well as between D and E. See the next few pages for a more in-depth look at Option c.

The Misunderstanding:



Anything a Calvinist thinks he disagrees with about Option c is due to him mixing Arminianism with Hyper-Arminianism and anything an Arminian thinks he disagrees with about Option c is due to him mixing Calvinism with Hyper-Calvinism.

Calvinism or Arminianism?

Both are Likely Partially True and Partially False

Introduction

The 10 Points of
Option c

- a. Arminians maintain that Calvinist views place God in a position that is unfair and unloving, uncharacteristic of the God of the Bible.
- b. Calvinists maintain that Arminian views place God in a position of diminished authority, depleting God of His sovereignty.

Which one is true? Well, since we know that God is love, God is just, and God is sovereign, than either one of the first two options doesn't place God in a position that is outside of His character, or, it must be **option c!** Since both sides argue that the other isn't characteristic of God, we will explore **option c**, but what is **option c**?

God's Omnipotence

t.①.l.①.②.

- 1) God is almighty; omnipotent! To better understand this we need to understand what omnipotence really is. Let's start by looking at what it's not: omnipotence is not the ability to do all things. "Omnipotent" means that if God sets out to do something, He can't fail. God will not do anything that goes against His nature, (He cannot lie, He cannot sin, etc.). This also includes not doing something illogical since God cannot turn truth into a lie. There are things about God that we can accept but not fully comprehend, (the Trinity, God being eternal, Jesus fully God and fully man, etc.). God could give us free will, being omnipotent and omniscient, knowing everything before it ever happens, even though it may sound like a paradox to us.

Here's essentially the question Arminians and Calvinists have been debating for years:

Can God make humans in such a way that His grace cannot move (change) them?

Arminians of course say "Yes" while Calvinists say "No". Both seem to be right answers at first glance to the one answering but the question is not a logical one to begin with. It is similar to the atheistic pseudo-argument against the existence of God:

Can God make a rock so big that He cannot move it?

Answering yes or no means God can't do something but God won't do something that is impossible because this goes against the laws of logic, and thus, His character. So the question that should be asked is this:

Can God make humans in such a way that His grace DOES NOT move (change) them?

Answering yes to this question is logical and harmonious with what we know of the nature of God.

- 2) God is "all knowing", omniscient. He has complete knowledge, able to know and foresee all events unbound by time. This is probably, in my opinion, one of the most difficult attributes of God to try and understand. Without going into all of the possibilities associated with omniscience (if that's even possible), let us just look at a simple problem with the Arminian view of omniscience in regards to God's elect. (This view can be found on the TULIP reference page under "U") The Arminian view of the elect states that:

"God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world was based upon His foreseeing that they would respond to His call."

At first glance this seems to make sense; God elected those who He knew would freely believe and did not elect those who He knew would not, so the Bible just refers to the people God knew would choose Him as the elect. The problem with this view is that it seems almost misleading; the Bible states that God chose individuals, but really, all the time is referring to individuals who chose God. This view assumes God chose people in our reality by looking into a reality where He did not choose them.

Furthermore, some may believe that this view still allows God to be almighty and all-powerful; no one in our reality is resisting God because He elected those who He knew would freely believe and did not elect those who He knew would not. The problem with this is that people can still resist God but He avoids it by foreseeing it. God is almighty and all-powerful in our reality by looking into a reality where He is not, do you see the problem?

It can probably be argued that there is a difference between what "is" and what God can "foresee", especially when it comes to what's in man's heart, but that doesn't seem consistent with what we know of God's nature. So it would seem to follow that such a view of omniscience alone does not adequately explain election, but there is one primary possibility that allows "God-choosers" to be called "elected", and that's simply that Christians are both.

**God's
Transcendence**
t.u.l.i.p.

**Action and
Reaction**
t.u.l.i.p.

Relationships
t.u.l.i.p.

Understanding
t.u.l.i.p.

**God does not
Deceive**
t.u.l.i.p.

God Moves
t.u.l.i.p.

**It's Hard for
a Rich Man**
t.u.l.i.p.

**Effects of
Being Wrong**
t.u.l.i.p.

- 3) Without free will, could we boast because we are worthy to be chosen by God? Of course not! In the same way, we cannot boast if we choose God's gift of salvation because man did not give himself free will, God would ultimately be responsible so He gets ALL the glory (2x the glory in fact, once for the gift of free will, and again for the gift of Jesus' redemptive work on the cross). Another way to look at it is that free will is ultimately a result of God's sovereignty because our will is not absolute (Mar 9:23-24). So if God chose to give us free will, that doesn't make Him less sovereign. Human free will doesn't mean God can't make us do something, just that He has the power to choose not to, so the real question is: Can God do something that seems like a paradox to our finite human minds? The answer, of course, is yes because of God's transcendence, His ways are truly greater than what we can comprehend.
- 4) Faith is not the sinner's gift to God like the Arminian view maintains. A more accurate definition would be: Faith is a reaction of the sinner which results in God's gift of salvation, a gift God justly and lovingly offers to all sinners. Faith is not an act, a work, or an action. Faith is a REACTION (Rom 3:25-28).

(Our reaction "faith" first requires an action "God's grace"). What do we know about faith from God's Word? We know Abraham was counted as righteous because of his faith (Rom 4:3 & 19-22), Jesus performed less miracles because of people's lack of faith (Mat 13:58), and if some do not have faith, this does not nullify God's faithfulness (Rom 3:3-4). After all, why would Jesus use the analogy "well done good and faithful servant?" (Mat 25:21) What would faith be if election were all there was?
- 5) It would go against what we know about the nature of God NOT to give us a choice. A theme throughout God's Word is that He is relational and wants to know us personally, while loving us unconditionally. The model of this relationship is marriage (2Cr 11:2) symbolizing Christ and His bride "the church". What loving relationship involves a righteous man choosing a woman without her willingly choosing him as well? Not to say that there aren't arranged marriages in the world, or that us accepting God is to our glory, only that God being just and loving wants us to choose him. In other words, we are able to choose God not because we don't want to be puppets but because God is so much more than a puppeteer.

In the same way, if a man were chained to a wall and his master were to place bread in front of him just out of reach, when that man dies, can it be said that he had a fair chance to eat and survive even if he did not want food? Not to mention, election working against free will instead of with it, isn't a free gift, it's a forced gift.
- 6) God made everyone in His image, and because of this, we are able to understand and comprehend love and justice, which is why a lack of free will seems offensive (Rom 1:20, Psa 19:7-9). While we can never fully comprehend the mind of God, we can understand love and justice which we are taught to live by in the Bible. (When you think about it, not completely knowing the mind of God is actually possible evidence for there being truth in both views and it being incomprehensible to us on Earth).
- 7) God gave us a world where choice is evident and apparent. It would not be characteristic of a God of truth to make a world with the appearance of choice if we did not have it. What purpose would this serve? Just like the argument that "God made the earth appear old" is a poor argument and isn't in God's nature. In the same way, God wouldn't have us pray for the lost (2Th 3:1, 1Ti 2:1) if ultimately those prayers were meaningless, or Jesus wouldn't have commanded us to witness (The Great Commission) if it would ultimately have no affect on the spreading of the gospel. Using logic and apologetics is condoned in the Bible as well (1Cr 9:22, Act 17:16-21), this too, not being necessary, goes against God's character and is illogical.
- 8) The Arminian view that "the sinner's choice of Christ is the ultimate cause of salvation" is not accurate. The Calvinistic view that "God's choice of the sinner is the ultimate cause of salvation" is closer to the truth but still not completely accurate. God is the ultimate cause of salvation because He lovingly and justly allows us to choose Him while at the same time moving in our hearts (Jhn 3:16-18, Rom 5:16-19).
- 9) For Calvinism to stand alone, verses like (Mat 19:21-26) would mean that something God sets out to do can be difficult for Him (vs. 23). This verse would have to be talking about salvation being difficult for God if man has no choice in the matter. Otherwise Calvinism would be borrowing from the Arminian view because this is a situation involving salvation, not sin. Saying it seems hard for the rich man when he has no say in the matter is uncharacteristic of a God of truth. Option c rings true in verse 26.
- 10) Both Calvinists and Arminians agree that evangelism is very important (as they should). When it comes to evangelism, IF WE ARE WRONG, which view would have the most negative affect? For the Calvinist, if he is wrong about the elect and we do have free will, this can cause people to reject Christ because they may feel their decision doesn't matter. For the Arminian, if he is wrong about free will and we are only elected, this will not hurt his witness. The latter is the same for Option c.

Similarities to Option c

God has two wills, throughout history they've been known by different names: **sovereign will** and **moral will**, **efficient will** and **permissive will**, **decretive will** and **preceptive will**, etc. Whatever you prefer to call it, the point is there's sometimes a distinct difference between what God "wants" and what God "does" and it's important to note that this difference (not the reason behind it) can be agreed upon by both Calvinists and Arminians. (An example of this would be that God wishes or wills that all people should be saved but this does not mean that all will be saved.) I bring this up to point out that the need for this existence of a difference in what God wants and what He does is further evidence that we can't fully understand God in His complexity. Also, Option c is most consistent with this fact because it acknowledges this without denying key attributes of God.

Calvinism maintains that God is still loving and just but the reason it doesn't seem to be so is because our fallen human minds cannot comprehend what love and justice truly are.

Option c recognizes love and justice but states that we cannot fully understand how God uses election and free will together. This view may seem most like Arminianism because it allows free will but of the three, I believe it is the most glorifying to God because to believe it is to admit God's ways are truly beyond understanding without limiting His love and justice.

Conclusion

Calvinism: Everything we do is ultimately not about others when it comes to evangelizing because it's only for our growth and God's glory having no influence on other people's wills. While it is commendable for someone to set personal feelings aside and choose what seems to ultimately place God's sovereignty above self, in doing so however, that person actually sacrifices what we know about God's character in regards to love and justice which elevates their own knowledge and thus, their mind, above God's.

God's Attributes work against each other



Arminianism: God's love and justice endures but this view of faith diminishes the authority of God and is quite dangerous. We become worthy of saving by our own ability, placing our will above God's. This view of the elect is also not consistent with a God of truth so it too places man's mind above God's.

God's nature is divided



Option c: When we can admit we don't and can't fully understand faith in conjunction with God's will, we place God in a position that's truly almighty and all powerful, fitting perfectly with what we know about God. It's in and of itself a testament to God's almighty power. After all, in regards to salvation, Jesus Himself said, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (Jhn 3:8) There's a mystery to God and to salvation.

God's Attributes work together and He is truly Indivisible



Brothers and sisters, whatever view you feel fits God's Word and His character, let it unify us as the Body of Christ. We are not labeled Calvinists, Arminians or a combination of the two; we are Christians, "Little Christs" saved and loved by God. Let our views bring us together for the soul purpose of glorifying God and spreading the Good News. As long as we are doing that, nothing else really matters.

T.U.L.I.P. Reference Guide

The "Five Points" of Calvinism

The "Five Points" of Arminianism

Total Inability or Total Depravity

Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not--indeed he cannot--choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ--it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation--it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.



Free Will or Human Ability

Although human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but He does not interfere with man's freedom. Each sinner possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power to either cooperate with God's Spirit and be regenerated or resist God's grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the Spirit's assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe, for faith is man's act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinner's gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation.

Unconditional Election

God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God's choice. Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.



Conditional Election

God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world was based upon His foreseeing that they would respond to His call. He selected only those whom He knew would of themselves freely believe the gospel. Election therefore was determined by or conditioned upon what man would do. The faith which God foresaw and upon which He based His choice was not given to the sinner by God (it was not created by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit) but resulted solely from man's will. It was left entirely up to man as to who would believe and therefore as to who would be elected unto salvation. God chose those whom He knew would, of their own free will, choose Christ. Thus the sinner's choice of Christ, not God's choice of the sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

Limited Atonement or Particular Redemption

Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, therefore guaranteeing their salvation.



Universal Redemption or General Atonement

Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone. Although Christ died for all men and for every man, only those who believe on Him are saved. His death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins. Christ's redemption becomes effective only if man chooses to accept it.

Irresistible Grace or The Efficacious Call of the Spirit

In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is, rejected; whereas the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by man's will, nor is He dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.



The Holy Spirit Can be Effectually Resisted

The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation; He does all that He can to bring every sinner to salvation. But inasmuch as man is free, he can successfully resist the Spirit's call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner until he believes; faith (which is man's contribution) precedes and makes possible the new birth. Thus, man's free will limits the Spirit in the application of Christ's saving work. The Holy Spirit can only draw to Christ those who allow Him to have His way with them. Until the sinner responds, the Spirit cannot give life. God's grace, therefore, is not invincible; it can be, and often is, resisted and thwarted by man.

Perseverance of the Saints

All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end.



Falling from Grace

Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up their faith, etc. All Arminians have not been agreed on this point; some have held that believers are eternally secure in Christ -- that once a sinner is regenerated, he can never be lost.