

# TOTAL DEPRAVITY

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## READ [HAMARTIOLOGY PT. V “What Are the Effects of Sin on My Life?”

- Matt. 13:14-16
- Romans 3:9-18
- Ephesians 2:1-10

## AN INTRODUCTION

“One of the most potentially divisive debates in the history of the church centers around the opposing doctrines of salvation known as Calvinism and Arminianism. Calvinism is based on the theological beliefs and teaching of John Calvin (1509-1564), a leader of the Reformation, and Arminianism is based on the views of Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609). After studying under John Calvin's son-in-law in Geneva, Jacobus Arminius started out as a strict Calvinist. Later, as a pastor in Amsterdam and professor at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands, Arminius' studies in the book of Romans led to doubts and rejection of many Calvinistic doctrines.

- In summary, Calvinism centers on the supreme sovereignty of God, predestination, the total depravity of man, unconditional election, limited atonement, **irresistible grace**, and the perseverance of the saints.
- Arminianism emphasizes conditional election based on God's foreknowledge, man's free will through **prevenient grace** to cooperate with God in salvation, Christ's universal atonement, resistible grace, and salvation that can potentially be lost.”<sup>1</sup>

## BEGINNING WITH TULIP

TULIP is an acronym used as a learning device to help someone understand the 5 points of Calvinism which were stated in the Canons of Dort. A short study of when the acronym was first used had led me to believe that the acronym wasn't used in writing until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century around 1905. These points were original to the Canons of Dort, or Canons of Dordrecht. The document was titled The Decision of the Synod of Dort on the Five Main Points of Doctrine in Dispute in the Netherlands. The Canons of Dort are the judgment of the National Synod held in the Dutch city of Dordrecht in 1618–19. The canons are a judicial decision upholding the Belgic Confession. Following the death of Arminius (1560–1609), his followers set forth a Remonstrance published in 1610, in five articles formulating their points of departure from the stricter Calvinism of the Belgic Confession. Although not original to the document or even to the order of the document this acronym has become synonymous with Calvinism. Our topic tonight, Total Depravity, was actually inside of the third and fourth heads of doctrine in the canons of Dort.

The synod of Dort published the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> article under one heading because they are by necessity linked. *Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine; Of the Corruption of Man, His Conversion to God, and the Manner Thereof*

- The Five Articles of Remonstrance [i.e. “protest”]

### Jacob Arminius

“This is my opinion concerning the free-will of man: In his primitive condition as he came out of the hands of his creator, man was endowed with such a portion of knowledge, holiness and power, as enabled him to understand, esteem, consider, will, and to perform the true good, according to the commandment delivered to him. Yet none of these acts could he do, except through the assistance of Divine Grace. But in his lapsed and sinful state, man is not capable, of and by himself, either to think, to will, or to do that which is really good; but it is necessary for him to be regenerated and renewed in his intellect, affections or will, and in all his powers, by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, that he may be qualified rightly to understand, esteem, consider, will, and perform whatever is truly good. When he is made a partaker of this regeneration or renovation, I consider that, since he is delivered from sin, he is capable of thinking, willing and doing that which is good, but yet not without the continued aids of Divine Grace.”

Arminius had done study's in romans and concluded that the reformers were wrong about Romans chapter 9

Arminians come to a different conclusion about Romans 9. We hold that it's about the election of the nation Israel to serve God's greater purposes. Specifically, it's about how God is just in how he has treated Israel. And it's about how he has kept his word in the way that he has treated them. It is not about Calvinistic individual election. Paul is asking if the nation of Israel can be saved, and if God is fair in the way he goes about treating them as a group. Are Jews saved by their genealogy? Or must Jews believe in Jesus in order to be saved? Paul argues that even though Jews are descendants of Jacob and Abraham, they don't get a free ticket because of their ancestry (Romans 9:8). Israel has been blessed as a people group, because salvation comes from the Jews. However, individual Jews are saved the same way that Gentiles are – by having faith in Jesus (Romans 9:31, Romans 10:11-13).

<https://wesleyanarminian.wordpress.com/2014/09/19/arminian-principles-for-interpreting-romans-9/>

1. Article 1 – Conditional election
2. Article 2 – Unlimited atonement
3. Article 3 – Total depravity (serious depravity)
4. Article 4 – Prevenient grace (resistible grace)
5. Article 5 – Conditional preservation of the saints (uncertainty about perseverance)

- The Cannons of Dort

The Canons of Dort rejected the articles brought forward by the Remonstrates. This has led us, century's later, to the familiar acronym TULIP.

1. **Total Depravity**
2. **Unconditional Election** (our salvation does not rest on us; it rests solely on the gracious, sovereign decision of God. God does not foresee an action or condition on our part that induces Him to save us)
3. **Limited Atonement** (Was Christ's atonement able to save if man had free will and no one came. Or was it guaranteed to bring results)
4. **Irresistible Grace** (The special grace given to the elect is so affectionate that it will draw the person)
5. **Perseverance of the Saints** (Christ will never lose those who are His)

## THE DEFINITION OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY

- **Remonstrance Article 3 (Arminian)**

**That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free will, inasmuch as he, in the state of apostasy and sin, can of and by himself neither think, will, nor do anything that is truly good (such as saving faith eminently is);** but that it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through his Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good, according to the Word of Christ, **John 15:5**, **"Without me ye can do nothing."** <https://www.theopedia.com/five-articles-of-remonstrance>

- **Total Depravity, by Loraine Boettner (Calvinist)<sup>2</sup>**

"In the Westminster Confession the doctrine of Total Inability is stated as follows: — **"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 good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto."** (This is under chapter 9 free will in the Westminster confession)

"This doctrine of Total Inability, which declares that men are dead in sin, does not mean that all men are equally bad, nor that any man is as bad as he could be, nor that any one is entirely destitute of virtue, nor that human nature is evil in itself, nor that man's spirit is inactive, and much less does it mean that the body is dead. What it does mean is that since the fall man rests under the curse of sin, that he is actuated by wrong principles, and that he is wholly unable to love God or to do anything meriting salvation. His corruption is extensive but not necessarily intensive."

- **Human Depravity, by R.C. Sproul (Calvinist)**<sup>3</sup>

“The Bible teaches the total depravity of the human race. Total depravity means radical corruption. We must be careful to note the difference between total depravity and "utter" depravity. To be utterly depraved is to be as wicked as one could possibly be. Hitler was extremely depraved, but he could have been worse than he was. I am sinner. Yet I could sin more often and more severely than I actually do. I am not utterly depraved, but I am totally depraved. For total depravity means that I and everyone else are depraved or corrupt in the totality of our being. **There is no part of us that is left untouched by sin. Our minds, our wills, and our bodies are affected by evil. We speak sinful words, do sinful deeds, have impure thoughts. Our very bodies suffer from the ravages of sin.**”

“Perhaps "radical corruption" is a better term to describe our fallen condition than "total depravity." I am using the word "radical" not so much to mean "extreme," but to lean more heavily on its original meaning. "Radical" comes from the Latin word for "root" or "core." Our problem with sin is that it is rooted in the core of our being. It permeates our hearts. It is because sin is at our core and not merely at the exterior of our lives that the Bible says: "There is none righteous, no not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one." Romans 3:10-12.”

## **UNDERSTANDING THE “WILL”**

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN FREE WILL AND FREE AGENCY, INABILITY: FALLEN HUMAN BEINGS ARE BOTH FREE AND ENSLAVED, by J.I. Packer. From: Concise Theology: A Guide To Historic Christian Beliefs

“Free agency is a mark of human beings as such. All humans are free agents in the sense that they make their own decisions as to what they will do, choosing as they please in the light of their sense of right and wrong and the inclinations they feel. Thus they are moral agents, answerable to God and each other for their voluntary choices.”

“Free will, however, has been defined by Christian teachers from the second century on as the ability to choose all the moral options that a situation offers, and Augustine affirmed against Pelagius and most of the Greek Fathers that original sin has robbed us of free will in this sense. We have no natural ability to discern and choose God’s way because we have no natural inclination Godward; our hearts are in bondage to sin, and only the grace of regeneration can free us from that slavery.”

## STRIKING THE COMMON GROUND | CONTINUED QUESTIONS

(1) All men need to be saved from God's wrath through the atoning work of Christ

(2) Both Reformed and Arminians believe, that, without the grace of God, man is totally incapable of responding to the Gospel. In this both positions are in total agreement.

Seeing both sides seem to agree on Total Depravity, and that man needs God grace to be saved, what's the problem? The problem is in the interpretation of how God has chosen or planned to manifest this grace to man. Did God predestine [predetermine] it or did God allow enough grace so that Man could choose according to his own free will.

- Which one comes first [grace or will] and does it matter?
- Can man choose God or does God choose man?
- If man chooses God what is the prompting?
  - Did God predestine [predetermine] those whom he chose before time began to receive special salvific grace and is that grace so irresistible that it cannot be denied?
  - Or did God give out prevenient grace so all man could freely choose, and then, due to foreknowledge, look down the corridors of time and see who would be saved and who would not.
  - If God predestined man is there any culpability in man, does this pervert God's goodness and justice?
  - Or do we believe in open theism and think God does not yet know who will be saved? (This is heresy)
    - This will lead us to the decrees of God  
<https://www.monergism.com/topics/god%E2%80%99s-attributes/decrees-god>

Both sides know that God is both right and just to hold sinners accountable. But how can they be held accountable, if the fall is so complete that the natural man has no ability left to choose. Both the Calvinist and the Arminian will agree that God has given enough grace (evidence) to the fallen world to hold them accountable. It is HOW God gives that grace that is debated.

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<sup>1</sup> Calvinism Vs. Arminianism Explore the opposing doctrines of Calvinism and Arminianism By Mary Fairchild Updated on July 03, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> **Loraine Boettner** ([/ˈbɛtnər/](#); March 7, 1901 – January 3, 1990) was an American theologian, teacher, and author in the Reformed tradition. He is best known for his works on predestination, Roman Catholicism, and Postmillennial eschatology.

<sup>3</sup> **Robert Charles Sproul** ([/sproʊl/](#) *SPROHL*; February 13, 1939 – December 14, 2017) was an American [Reformed theologian](#) and ordained pastor in the [Presbyterian Church in America](#).