



WHY DO WE BELIEVE *THAT* ?

Introduction to Reformed Theology

Class 13

ULTIP, PART 2

Education Year 2024-2025

Rev. Mark H. Vander Pol



1

Review – ULTIP Part I

- History and Rise of Arminianism
- Decline of Reformed Orthodoxy
- God's Decree
- “Unconditional Election” and “Double Predestination”
- Infralapsarianism vs. Supralapsarianism
 - Some clarification is needed!



2

Confusion over Infra- vs. Supralapsarianism

- In the ordering of the decrees of God (ectypal) is the decree to elect / reprobate before (above) or below (infra) the decree to permit the fall?

Infralapsarianism

1. Create
2. Permit the Fall
3. Predestine the elect and pass by or reprobate the rest of fallen sinners
4. Appoint Christ as Savior to redeem the elect
5. Provide means of salvation

Supralapsarianism

1. Predestine some individuals to salvation and others to damnation
2. Create
3. Permit the fall
4. Appoint Christ as Savior to redeem the elect
5. Provide means of salvation

Chart from Fesko, "The Everlasting Love of God" in Payne & Heck, *A Faith Worth Defending*, 47.



Confusion over Infra- vs. Supralapsarianism

- I told the class that the Reformed Confessions were infralapsarian and I said that was my conviction too.
 - Immediately I heard from some who asked about the fact that we are elected by God (in eternity past) *before* the creation so how can that be the infra- position?
- When we are talking about Election/Reprobation | Infra- and Supralapsarianism we are talking about the eternal *decree* of God—not the execution of that decree in created time and space.
 - The decree of God is the perfect and eternal plan for all things, including who will be elected or passed over.
 - There is one decree of God, but we speak of it at times in the plural because of our need to break it up into parts.
 - The execution of the decree puts that perfect plan into place.



Scriptural Witness re: Election

- Acts 13:48, “And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.”
- Eph 1:4-5, “even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will. . .”
- Rom 8:29, “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”
- Rom 9:13, “As it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’”
- Rom 9:18, “As it is written, ‘So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.’”



Scriptural Witness re: Election

- 2 Tim 1:9, “who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.”
- 1 Peter 1:1-2, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.”



Scriptural Witness re: Reprobation

- I Peter 2:7-8, “So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,’ and ‘A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.’ They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.”
- Jude 4, “For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”
- Rev 20:15, “And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”



7

Characterizing Arminian Doctrine

- The Arminian Position is not unified
 - The Remonstrants after Arminius’ death took his theology to places he probably wouldn’t agree with.
 - There are some that would agree with various parts of the “Reformed” position on the doctrine of salvation, but others would deny that outright.
- Tried to find a good foil for our comparing and contrasting Reformed Theology and Arminian Theology: used Roger Olson
 - *Against Calvinism* (2011)– really he is reacting to the “Young, Restless, and Reformed” movement of the mid to late 2000s, which did have some idiosyncrasies. He is also reacting to some “hyper-Calvinists.”
 - His “Calvinistic” authorities were routinely one the fringes of the Reformed world, or they were completely, unknown to me or even some internet theologians.



8

Characterizing the Arminian Position

- Olson continued:
 - *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (2006) is better on some levels.
- Because Arminian theology isn't unified we can run up against men like Olson who are very nuanced and agree with us on some points, but others who are more direct and disagree with us ("Calvinists") at every turn.
 - According to Olson, he does not believe that the doctrine and theology preached in most evangelical pulpits is Classical Arminianism, but is semi-Pelagian if not Pelagianism.
 - See quote from *Arminian Theology*, p. 30

1. Roger Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 30.



9

Evangelical or Arminian?

- Olson makes a distinction in the Arminian camp.
 - See quote from *Arminian Theology*, p. 16-17
- There are still matters to disagree with Olson on, but most of our "day-to-day" interactions with those who disagree with us on the "doctrines of grace" will not be classical Arminians, but the broader "Evangelical."
 - Some men that have come out of that broader Evangelical world, but would still characterize that theology as Arminianism (which drives Olson nuts!).
- Olson seems to allow the love of God to be the defining attribute that determines all the rest.
 - In a speech he talked a lot about "my God wouldn't do that."
 - See quotes from *Against Calvinism*, p. 61 and end of 67.
 - He has faith (albeit with the use of prevenient grace) preceding regeneration (more on that in a later class).



10

Evangelical or Arminian?

- My defining of terms moving forward:
 - *Small “e” evangelical* – Those who believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ, ideally in agreement with the Five-Solas of the Reformation
 - *Big “E” Evangelical or Broad Evangelicals* – Those who are decidedly not Reformed, reject at least the idea of creeds and confessions, and which comprise the majority of the theological landscape in America.
 - Many are brothers and sisters in Christ, but when their theology tends toward Pelagianism or Universalism, we can sincerely wonder.
- I do recognize that I might be making broad generalizations in our interaction with “contrary positions,” but I will try to be fair and balanced. Call me out if I’m not!



11

Contrary to Unconditional Election

- The problem Arminians/Evangelicals have with the Reformed Doctrine of Election is its double nature (God elected the elect and passed over the reprobate, thereby condemning them to hell) and in the unconditional nature of it.
 - Olson uses the term that our theology makes God into a “moral monster.”
 - See quote from *Against Calvinism*, p. 61.
 - Jacob Arminius too wanted to protect the idea that God was/is responsible for evil.
 - Missed distinction between archetypal and ectypal concerning the communicable attributes of God.
 - Making our fallible understanding indicative of God’s character and understanding.
 - Deut 29:29
 - Isaiah 55:8-9



12

Contrary to Unconditional Election

- Some Evangelicals deny the Reformed / Biblical doctrine of election because they want to protect the “free will” of men.
 - The choice is ultimately up to each individual whether or not they believe—they have the “free will” to do that.
 - We respond: our wills are not free, but are in bondage to sin.
 - The doctrines of Total Depravity and Irresistible Grace comes into play here.
- Some, like Olson, don’t deny election but need to qualify what the decree of God does and doesn’t do, they also qualify what man needs to do or can do in this regard.
 - Olson and others use the Arminian phrase “prevenient grace” to define how this works.
 - Starting to blur the lines between “Irresistible Grace” and “Unconditional Election.”



13

Prevenient Grace

- See quotes from *Arminian Theology*, p. 159-160; *Against Calvinism*, p. 67.
 - Definition from *Against Calvinism*:
It attributes the sinner's ability to respond to the gospel with repentance and faith to (prevenient grace)—the illuminating, convicting, calling, and enabling power of the Holy Spirit working on the sinner's soul and making them free to choose saving grace (or reject it).
- Our understanding of the grace of God working upon the heart of the unregenerate isn’t divided—it is just God’s effectual/justifying grace.
 - The fact that this prevenient grace of God can be resisted by the individual, really raises a lot of questions on the claimed monergism of Olson.
- For Arminians election is based on the “foreseen faith” of individuals and they reject the doctrine of reprobation.
- Also, for them, election is based on a condition (faith) not individuals.
 - See CD I.RE I-3



14

Arminian Passages

- In the chapter of *Arminian Theology* on predestination, Olson only gives *one* verse in support of their position.
 - Romans 8:29 and the idea of God's foreknowledge. "...Arminians interpret predestination with God's foreknowledge of believers."
 - No expounding of the passage or words from a biblical theology standpoint.
- In the chapter of *Against Calvinism*, he cites a lot more passages, but most of them have to do with either God's love or God's love for the world and his desire that "no one perish" (e.g. I Tim 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9).
 - He simply dismisses Romans 9-11 and Ephesians 1 by claiming they are not about individual election (p. 125).
- No wrestling with Acts 13:48; I Peter 2:8 or other passages.



15

Answering their passages

- "Foreknowledge" in Romans 8:29 – The word is only used five times in the NT and three of those times are in a context that doesn't have to do with salvation.
 - Arminians say that "foreknowledge" means God knows an individual will not resist or will accept the call of God in prevenient grace and come to faith.
 - Romans 11:2 does speak about believers and salvation, but in the following verses God is speaking about the faithful in Israel in the time of Elijah, but there is nothing supporting the Arminian understanding of foreknowledge.
- Ephesians 1 – Claimed that this is only about the "church" being predestined not individuals because of the use of plural pronouns.
 - The pronouns are "us" and "we" and to make that apply strictly to the church and not individuals doesn't line up with the other "individualistic" election passages.



16

Answering Objections

- Ask them “What do you mean by that?”
 - Make them define our position and defend their position. Many probably don’t know or understand the Reformed position. Just take them to the Bible!
- What about “Free will” and our ability to resist God’s “prevenient grace”
 - Is it free? (Touching on Total Depravity)
 - Jeremiah 17:9
 - Romans 3:10-18 (cf. Ps 14:1-3; 53:1-3; etc.)
 - Romans 6:6
 - Ephesians 2:1-3
- Ask about the character of God: his holiness, justice, righteousness, omniscience, immutability, etc. in relation to his love.
- What *do* we say about reprobation?
 - Infralapsarians might have a little easier time defending their position.
 - CD 1.15-16



17

Next Week

- Limited Atonement



18