

The Anatomy of an Arminian

1. Believes that man has a free will (that he is a free, moral agent), by which he may decide whether or not to become a Christian in response to the gospel requirement of faith.
2. Believes that Christ's sacrificial death on the cross was provided by God as a universal act of atonement for the sins of all mankind.
3. Believes that God loves everyone, and wants everyone to be saved.
4. Believes that God is accessible by prayer to all, and answers their prayers—according to His will.

Consider what scriptural truths that an Arminian believer has to contradict, ignore, or fail to know in order to hold the above beliefs—for which there is no excuse or allowance by God:

The doctrine of total depravity, with the concomitant incapacity of total inability.

The Arminian influence on this consequential factor is easily explained. Once you believe (assume with the vast majority of Christians) that faith must be exercised before spiritual conversion is possible (as if it were a foregone conclusion), then you force the extent of inability to be something less than complete, or prohibitive of believing.

The same effect results from believing in universal atonement. If God loves everyone, and Christ died for everyone's sin, as the words of John 3:16 seem to be obvious "proof", along with the associated statement that whosoever believeth in him shall be saved (become a Christian), then it would appear that believing is possible for anyone confronted with the "proposition".

That is the basic philosophy of practically all contemporary preaching and teaching of the gospel and related salvation doctrine.

Once the premise of a universal love of mankind and salvation provision is established in people's minds as fundamental gospel truth, it forces its adherents to interpret all other associated doctrine in a way that conforms to that basic theory. Which, if nothing else, is irresponsible, dishonest scholarship; but far worse: unfaithful, disloyal allegiance to God, and His truth.

The heritage of which is the perpetuated testimony of an ill-conceived principle—all in the name of the gospel.

I would characterize it as a relativistic concept—demonstrably in violation of absolute scriptural principles, as it cannot stand the true test of exegesis (proof by examination and

analysis).

Ideas, and variant opinions do not constitute true theology. They are the stuff of sects, denominations, cults, and any other deviancy—not representation of the true church’s testimony and teaching.

A distinguishing characteristic of the Arminian (free will) mindset is that it is subjective, rather than objective. That is, often motivated by emotional rationalization vs. logical, principled reasoning.

This is especially evident when dealing with some of the harder truths of the bible regarding original sin, with eternal salvation for some, and condemnatory judgment for others.

These matters require strict conservative interpretation, but too often Christians succumb to liberal, rationalized, relative modifications of those truths resulting in erroneous, even heretical beliefs.

Isn’t there any thought of those involved on the wrong side of the issue that they have tampered with God’s word and corrupted the meaning of His revelations? Not to accept particular doctrines in the strongest sense of the words revealing them—is not to accept God in the most authoritative, serious way that the scriptures represent Him!

Again, every time we modify the meaning God intended in His word—however hard to accept, even awesome the implications of it may be—we characterize Him in the image of our minds, not purely and fearfully (reverently) as we are responsible to do.

There is a hymn titled, “This is My Father’s World”. Well, we ought to say about the bible that, “This is My Father’s Word”, and we are obligated, commanded to learn its meaning—even if only simply, yet fundamentally sound with as much unity in the church as possible.

Idealistic? Impractical? Maybe, but these are not legitimate excuses not to aim as high as we might attain. We cannot rationalize about God’s commands to us, or lower the bar because we think the maximum obtainable results are something lower than the ideal. It may indeed turn out like we expect, but we do not have options, nor can we allow ourselves to be complacent or satisfied with relative success.

God sets the standards, and He would not make them anything but realistic. They require maximum effort, which can and will produce promised results. Then, even though varying degrees of accomplishment will occur, according to individuals, responsibilities, and circumstances, they will be acceptable to God as faithful, good works.

Another common denominator of Arminian theology is its fault of compromise. What they would call legitimate differences of interpretation compared to Calvinism is consistently lower in its gravity and decisiveness.

More specifically, it is characteristically relative vs. absolute! Or, always a downward adjustment of the literal meaning of the doctrines in question. Which, rather by design or philosophical predisposition, makes the sense of interpretation favor man in its increased liberality toward him.

Still another systematic practice of free will theology is the reliance upon grammar or language vs. using logical, contextual reasoning and analysis to establish doctrinal principles.

For instance, the classic scripture of John 3:16 and similar passages is a prime example of determining the meaning of such verses by key words in them—instead of realizing that those scriptures must agree and harmonize with the entire doctrinal subject.

That is, if a particular statement in the bible seems on its face to say something specific—but different than other references to the subject—than the variance must be resolved to avoid the confusion of having more than one interpretation.

The key word referred to in John 3:16 is “world”. Its contextual meaning must be determined. To an Arminian, it means everyone on earth. But even grammatically the word is not that exclusive, or static, with only one definition. We are so naturally disposed to define writings on the basis of language, that we sometimes (most of the time) don’t even look for, or consider context..

I would venture to say that the Jew to Gentile transition of the passage cited is probably seldom seen or noted for its defining theme. For a full treatment of that technically important subject, please refer to the section on the word “world” in pages 40-46 of “Disputing the Free Will Concept”, included in this publication.

It would seem that one could not honestly deny the credence that the conclusions of that study give to the Calvinistic interpretation of John 3:16, et al. If nothing else, the volume of information set forth in that referenced material should show how oversimplified the Arminian assumption of the all-inclusiveness of the word “world” is.

The same criticism applies to the use of the words “whosoever”, “all”, “all men”, etc. Even the pronouns “us”, and “we” are often misapplied to everyone in general, when they are contextually and doctrinally only applicable to believers. And a timeless, fitting question from Luther applies, “Are we not to be logicians more than grammarians?”

A broad contrast between the sovereign grace emphasis of Calvinism (designate as C), and the free will, synergistic theology of Arminianism (designate as A), is the lack of decisiveness, or certainty of the latter compared to the former.

C is absolute, controlled and effectuated solely by divine action.

A is conditional, dependent upon human action, or reaction.

C can be shown to be agreeable and consistent with all other principles involved.

A does not support, or harmonize with certain other key related doctrines.

C is a much harder position to accept and advocate—naturally or humanly speaking, but because of its logic and consistency with all scriptural revelation—anchors and stabilizes the Christian who is faithful to its principles. A leaves important theological questions unanswered—or erroneously answered.

C is inclined to be objective, relying on his beliefs in predestination that God will do the work of bringing His elect to Himself. In terms of cause and effect, he knows that he is essentially only passive; whatever privilege he may have in various instances to be used in the process.

A is inclined to be subjective, using emotional appeals and various psychological methods of preaching and evangelizing (witnessing, i.e.)—believing them to be effectual means of helping (even “causing”) some people to come to know the Lord.

C believes, however unconventional, and almost revolutionary it may appear to most Christians, that faith, belief, trust, acceptance, confession and other similar exercises are only possible by those who have first received the spirit of God, or have been regenerated (become Christians).

A believes the initial occurrence of the above acts are an essential prelude to conversion.

Comparative order of events:

C - born again, and believes.

A - believes, and is born again.

A terse, theological truth—expressing the foregoing Calvinistic principle is that the elect are drafted into God’s army of believers, no one can enlist!

C recognizes and testifies of clear lines of distinction in the formulation of their theology, which they believe accurately expresses the governing biblical doctrine.

A cannot (will not) accept some of the hard truth presented by various scriptural passages relating to salvation, so they change the rules to fit their ideology.

For example, C maintains the fact that natural man cannot receive the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Cor. 2:14. To him, that means total inability, i.e., to even believe the gospel. But A will not extend the principle that far, because his philosophy allows that natural man can believe the gospel and accept salvation.

In C, God draws the line. In A, man redraws the line.

Not that simple to say? I would further describe A’s version as being a subtle manipulation of the truth? Subtle, in this sense: whereas C properly believes that man lost his free will in Adam’s fall, along with his spiritual capacity—so that his only possibility of salvation is direct intervention by God in the lives of those whom He has selected to save—A believes fallen man still has a free will, even against clear biblical teaching to the contrary.

Now, if it could be proven and established that belief of the gospel precedes conversion to Christianity, then that would either force an untenable interpretation on other salvation doctrine—or mean that there is no totally unified, incontrovertible theology possible.

But believing as C does, that no such proof is possible, the only falsely comforting factor that A has is consensus. And majority agreement does not in itself, or by its predominance, constitute true interpretation.

Being students of God's word does not authorize us to be judges of it; nor ever to be revisers of it! And yet, the Christian world is full of false beliefs, corruptions of scriptural truths, and corresponding misrepresentations of God Himself.

To be guilty of any of those things in the face of clear admonitions and warnings against it, without fear of declared and implicit consequences, nor shame in disobeying and disrespecting God—only serves to show how little true spirituality exists in today's church (body of believers).

Strange, that when God declares fallen, natural man to be spiritually dead, that most of His church finds some spark of life in that corpse, by which he can communicate with God, believe His gospel, and decide whether or not he will accept salvation. Its like everything in man was corrupted by sin, except his will, or some essential aspect of it. And yet, other than by false assumption, there is no scriptural substantiation of such a concept.