

# ARMINIANISM

Arminianism may be represented by the acronym FACTS:

**Freed by Grace (to Believe)**

**Atonement for All**

**Conditional Election**

**Total Depravity**

**Security in Christ**

These points broadly and roughly correspond to the historic Articles of Remonstrance (though they are not specifically a representation of them), which were composed in July 1610 by early Arminians and constitute the first formal summary of Arminian theology. Article numbers have been indicated for each point for convenient comparison. The points are presented here by logical order rather than acronym order to facilitate explanation most helpfully.

## **Total Depravity (Article 3)**

- Humanity was created in the image of God, good and upright, but fell from its original sinless state through willful disobedience, leaving humanity sinful, separated from God, and under the sentence of divine condemnation.
- Total depravity does not mean that human beings are as bad as they could be, but that sin impacts every part of a person's being and that people now have a sinful nature with a natural inclination toward sin, making every human being fundamentally corrupt at heart.
- Therefore, human beings are not able to think, will, nor do anything good in and of themselves, including merit favor from God, save ourselves from the judgment and condemnation of God that we deserve for our sin, or even believe the gospel.
- If anyone is to be saved, God must take the initiative.

# CALVINISM

The Calvinist position may be represented by the acronym TULIP:

**Total Depravity**

**Unconditional Election**

**Limited Atonement**

**Irresistible Grace**

**Perseverance of the Saints**

These are derived from the Synod of Dort, a local synod in Holland, which convened in 1618-1619 to contradict and condemn the Articles of Remonstrance. Here is a brief explanation of each point, with corresponding article numbers from the Articles of Remonstrance indicated for convenient comparison:

## **Total Depravity (Article 3)**

- Same as the Arminian points
- Though we do not differ on how to describe human depravity, Calvinists do also believe that this state requires that God first regenerate a sinner before he can believe in Christ, making him alive and giving him a new, holy nature. But regeneration does not merely enable the sinner to believe; it irresistibly causes the sinner to believe.

## Conditional Election (Article 1)

- God has sovereignly decided to choose only those who have faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, for salvation and his eternal blessing.
- God has foreknown from eternity which individuals would believe in Christ.
- Among Arminians, there are two different views of election conditioned on faith:
  1. *Individual election*: The classic view in which God individually chose each believer based upon His foreknowledge of each one's faith and so predestined each to eternal life
  2. *Corporate election*: Election to salvation is primarily of the Church as a people and embraces individuals only in faith-union with Christ the Chosen One and as members of his people. Since the election of the individual derives from the election of Christ and the corporate people of God, individuals become elect when they believe and remain elect only as long as they believe.

(For more on corporate election, see

<http://evangelicalarminians.org/A-Concise-Summary-of-the-Corporate-View-of-Election-and-Predestination.>)

## Atonement for All (Article 2)

- God loves the world and desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
- Therefore, God gave his only Son to die for the sins of the whole world so as to provide forgiveness and salvation for all people.
- While God has provided for the salvation of all people by Christ's sacrificial and substitutionary death for all, the benefits of Christ's death are received by grace through faith and are only effective for those who believe.

## Unconditional Election (Article 1)

- God chose some individuals unconditionally from eternity for eternal life according to his own good pleasure, completely apart from anything having to do with the person, including merit, good works, or foreseen faith.
- God withheld his mercy from the rest of humanity, ordaining them to dishonor and wrath for their sin.
- Thus, by the decree of God and for his glory, some people are unconditionally predestined to eternal life, and others are left (and so ordained) to eternal death because of their sin, making two specific and static groups of individuals that can never be changed. (Some Calvinists believe that God purposed to glorify his name by unconditionally choosing some individuals for eternal blessing and some individuals for eternal Hell, and that God ordained the Fall and decided to create the world to accomplish this goal.)

## Limited Atonement (Article 2)

- Christ died only for those certain individuals whom God chose unconditionally from eternity for salvation, enduring the punishment for their sins in their place.
- Christ's death for those who have been unconditionally elected irresistibly brings about their salvation and everything necessary for it, including repentance and faith in Christ.

## **Freed by Grace {to Believe} (Article 4)**

- Because of Total Depravity and Atonement for All (as described above), God calls all people everywhere to repent and believe the gospel, and graciously enables those who hear the gospel to respond to it positively in faith.
- God regenerates those who believe in Christ (faith logically precedes regeneration).
- God's saving grace is resistible, which is to say that he dispenses his calling, drawing, and convicting grace (which would bring us to salvation if responded to with faith) in such a way that we may reject it. Those who hear the gospel may either accept it by grace or reject it to their own eternal destruction.
- Apart from the realm of pleasing the Lord and doing spiritual good, people often have free will, which means that, with respect to an action, they can at least either do the action or refrain from doing it. People often have genuine choices and are therefore correspondingly able to make choices.
- God has ultimate and absolute free will. His choice to supernaturally free the will of sinners by his grace to believe in Christ is a matter of the exercise of his own free will and sovereignty.

## **Security in Christ (Article 5)**

- Since salvation comes through faith in Christ, the security of our salvation continues by faith in Christ.
- Just as the Holy Spirit empowered us to believe in Christ, so he empowers us to continue believing in Christ.
- God protects our faith relationship with him from any outside force irresistibly snatching us away from Christ or our faith, and he preserves us in salvation as long as we trust in Christ.
- Arminians have differing views of whether Scripture teaches that believers can forsake faith in Christ and so perish, or whether God irresistibly keeps believers from forsaking their faith and therefore entering into eternal condemnation (as unbelievers).

## **Irresistible Grace (Article 4)**

- Those whom God has unconditionally elected, and for whom Jesus died, God will draw irresistibly to faith in Christ by his grace through regeneration (making faith inevitable).
- When God brings elect sinners to Christ, he irresistibly causes them to be willing to come to Christ and to come to him in faith freely. (While we are presenting the Calvinist view objectively and typically without comment, the self-contradiction here is just too obvious to let pass: "*irresistibly causes* them to come *willingly* and *freely*?")
- While God calls all without distinction to faith in Christ (the general call), he only calls those he has chosen unconditionally in a way that cannot be resisted (the effectual call).
- Those God has not chosen will reject the gospel call of their own will and cannot do otherwise.

## **Perseverance of the Saints (Article 5)**

- Those whom God has unconditionally elected and for whom Jesus has died and whom God has irresistibly drawn to faith in Christ will inevitably persevere in their faith and can neither totally nor finally fall away from Christ, because God will irresistibly cause them to persevere. Therefore, their blessed eternal destiny with God is secure.
- This perseverance is not based on the believer, who may waver and actually fall into serious sin for periods of time, but is rather based on the continued grace of God.
- Those who appear to be believers, but fall away from the faith and die without faith in Christ, demonstrate that they had not truly come to saving faith in the first place.