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# Milton and the doctrine of the Synod of Dort Arminianism in Christian doctrine and Paradise lost

Robert James Fagg

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MILTON AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE SYNOD OF DORT:

ARMINIANISM IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

AND PARADISE LOST

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of English

University of Richmond

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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## PREFACE

The works of John Calvin were strongly influenced by the teachings and writings of St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas and even by Luther and Zwingli. Upon comparison of Calvin's Institute with the works of the theologians mentioned above, the similarities can be easily detected. By the same token, John Milton's works (Christian Doctrine and Paradise Lost), after a proper comparison has been made, can be classified as Arminian in nature and not Calvinistic.

The Synod of Dort, 1618-19, stands as one of the largest milestones in the old controversy involving predestination and free will in particular, and man and his relationship to God in general. This Synod ruled in favor of the absolute or Calvinistic side of the controversy and declared the Arminian beliefs (which Milton was to accept later) as heterodox dogma. The followers of Arminius, hereafter called Arminians or Remonstrants, presented to the Synod a written statement in regard to their wishes. This "Remonstrance" states the five points of Calvinism which the Arminians strongly objected to and presents the five Arminian articles which concisely summarize their beliefs.

In order to understand the similarities or areas of agreement between Milton's theology and that of the Arminians one not only has to understand thoroughly the five Arminian articles but also must be familiar with the theologies which produced them. This is the purpose of Chapter I in this thesis--to acquaint the reader with the doctrines advocated by the chief theologians on both sides of this controversy

(free will vs. predestination being the main point of disagreement) which has marked the entire history of the Christian Church.

Chapters II and III deal mainly with the comparisons between Milton's theology and that adhered to by the Arminians. By contrasting the doctrines of Calvin and his followers (i.e. the five cardinal points of Calvinism) with the beliefs of Milton and the Remonstrants, the similarities between Milton and the Arminians become even more apparent.

Only after such a comparison has been made can one accurately classify Milton as being definitely Arminian, that is, in full agreement with each of the five articles issued by the Remonstrants at the Synod of Dort in 1618-19.

The last two chapters, then, will attempt to show why a few scholars and theologians refer to Milton's Christian Doctrine and Paradise Lost as being Arminian by simply comparing the two theologies and pointing out the areas of definite agreement between them.

## CHAPTER I

### CALVIN AND ARMINIUS: THE REFORMATION

#### I

Another stage in the development of theological dogma, especially concerning the doctrine of predestination, came with the Reformation and the awakened moral conscience. Few leading theologians of the caliber of Paul, St. Augustine, or St. Thomas Aquinas arose to further a new synthesis of faith which the times demanded. As a result, surprisingly little progress was made in the growth and expansion of the predestination idea during the sixteenth century.

Among the precursors of Protestantism, John Wycliffe held the general opinion that God "probably" determines creatures (men) in all their acts. Therefore, some men were predestined to heaven or salvation after a life of exertion, while others, referred to as the foreknown, were destined to eternal punishment following their departure from an already miserable life. Similar views were developed and preached by many of the reformers of the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Vollert, "Predestination," Encyclopaedia Britannica (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1958), XVIII, 436.

In order to understand the traditional ideas of predestination as opposed to free will--especially the ideas held by Milton and the Arminians--one should be generally clear on the holdings of the main theologians in the controversy which has so profoundly influenced the whole history of the Christian Church.

Calvin's theological beliefs and the resulting five cardinal points of Calvinism are simply modifications of the basic theological ideas advocated by the Gnostics, Paul, and especially St. Augustine and

Martin Luther, Erasmus, and later Zwingli and Calvin, directly opposing the Pelagian doctrine on the issues of free will and predestination, agreed, with minor differences of course, in relying on St. Augustine concerning the basic points of Christian theology.

Luther is noted especially for his doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. However, Luther's concept of the "priesthood" was not

St. Thomas Aquinas. The beliefs and teachings of these men represent the main or orthodox train of thought which extends up to the eighteenth century.

Paul, just as the Gnostics had done before him, denied man's freedom of will; their solution was necessitarian, as the Calvinistic doctrine was also to be. (For a clear statement of Paul's stand, especially concerning the moral issues of God's relationship to man and vice versa, see Romans 8:29-30, 33; 8:21; 8:28; 7:18-21, 24-25, The Bible, King James Version.) Paul certainly advocated the absolute doctrine of predestination; throughout his entire Epistle to the Romans his arguments justifying the doctrine of election can be easily picked out.

The doctrine of St. Augustine, especially concerning free will and predestination, is very similar to St. Paul's doctrine. Man must be predestined by God to the ranks of the elect. Augustine's positions are not always entirely consistent; however, his theology does give a much clearer analysis of predestination as opposed to free will. (See St. Augustine, The Problem of Free Choice, pp. 137-38; De Praedestinatione sanctorum; and Faith Hope and Charity, p. 38, for definite statements concerning his views on the relations of God and man.)

There was surprisingly little change in the conception of the doctrine of predestination from Paul to St. Augustine. Man's fate was predetermined by God. With slight modifications, this is the very theological doctrine that St. Thomas Aquinas (thirteenth century) and Calvin (sixteenth century) were to accept. It was Aquinas (1227-1274) who quelled somewhat this maelstrom of medieval thought. He attempted to cut down on the many verbal inconsistencies which were found in the doctrines of St. Augustine. In his Summa Theologica, St. Thomas issued his opinions (in eight articles) on the still controversial matters of predestination and free will. (See Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas, I, 125-26; also refer to Aquinas' Nature and Grace: Selections from the Summa Theologica, pp. 137-54.)

Thus through the Middle Ages and even up to the Reformation, the dispute over the acceptance or rejection of predestination went on. The theology advocated by Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, and later Calvin, however, was considered as the orthodox belief.



quite as liberal or broad as it may seem to be. A closer look at Luther's doctrine indicates that in order to be a member of the priesthood of all believers, the individual must be of the elect; no work (good deeds or merit) was required.

A Christian man has no need of any work or of any law in order to be saved, since through faith he is free from every law and does all that he does . . . freely, seeking neither benefit nor salvation . . . since he man already abounds in all things and is saved through the grace of God because of his faith, and now seeks only to please God.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, Luther felt that man was saved by the Word of God, by the promise of his grace, and by faith in God and His goodness, not by laws or by works.

In answer to the Diatribes on Free Will, published by Erasmus in 1524, Luther submitted his treatise On the Bondage of the Will, September-October, 1525. Concerning his opinion on predestination and free will, Luther stated that

As for myself, I confess that were I offered free will, I would not have it or any other instrument that might aid in my salvation; not only because, besieged by so many perils and adversities, amidst that horde of devils who assail me on all sides, it would be impossible for me to preserve or make use of that instrument of salvation, since one devil is stronger than all men put together, and no way of real salvation would be open to me. . . . But since God has taken charge of my salvation, independently of my free will, and has promised to save me by his grace and his mercy without the concurrence of my works, I am certain that he is powerful enough to prevent me from being broken by adversity or carried off by the devil. So then if all are not elect, much

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<sup>2</sup> Martin Luther, A Treatise on Christian Liberty, in Three Treatises, trans. by W. A. Lambert (Philadelphia, 1913), p. 272. Calvin accepted this idea; Arminius and Milton rejected it. They believed in faith and works.

fewer will be so, while by free will none could be saved, and all would perish.<sup>3</sup>

Luther, then, did believe that the human will had some power; enough to enable him [man] to tell the difference between things which were subject to reason. Man's will, however, did not have power without the Holy Spirit, or grace of God.<sup>4</sup>

Concerning Luther's conception or interpretation of the doctrine of predestination, it is apparent that he remained quite close to the Augustinian view, which John Calvin accepted also.

Arminius was the theologian who was to reject bluntly the idea that man was unconditionally predestined by God and, as a result, had no free will to act as he may choose. Both Arminius and John Milton rejected the Augustinian issues of election and reprobation; they believed man did have a free will, granted to them by a good and merciful God, and could choose as they wished to.

## II

Certainly the importance of Luther, Erasmus, Zwingli and Philipp Melancthon,<sup>5</sup> who were all prominent Reformation theologians, is not to

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<sup>3</sup>Albert Hyma, Luther's Theological Development from Erfurt to Augsburg (New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1928), pp. 76-77; also see Luther's Works, XVIII, 600-787, 783, 288-89.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 83-84. Luther related this in his Articles of Faith at the Confession of Augsburg, in 1530.

<sup>5</sup>Vollert, "Predestination," Encyclopaedia Britannica, p. 437; Melancthon originally agreed with Luther; however, he later advocated a doctrine of predestination which concedes that the promises of the Gospels have been made for the benefit of all. According to Melancthon,

be taken lightly; but the great doctor of predestination among the reformers was John Calvin, who formed into a system various elements taken from St. Paul, St. Augustine, Aquinas, Wycliffe, Luther and Martin Bucer. Calvinism, as this system was soon to be called, generally speaking, is the best representative of the theological concept of predestination in the Reformation period.

By Calvinism is meant the system of theological belief especially associated with the name of John Calvin and embodied in substance in the Confessions and Catechisms of that section of the Protestant church known as "Reformed," in distinction from the Lutheran section. Calvinism also includes the system of ecclesiastical polity, or Presbyterianism, outlined by Calvin and, generally speaking, found associated with his type of doctrine in churches that have adopted this doctrine.<sup>6</sup>

Calvinism has been associated with many forms of Church government and order. In the English Reformation, Calvinistic doctrines were associated for some time with Episcopalianism. Calvin's doctrines also moulded the Puritan theology to a great extent. These same Calvinist doctrines were, for the most part, taken over into Congregationalism and consequently ruled it up until recent times. There have been, and still are, Calvinistic Baptists and Methodists; and Presbyterianism

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God, from eternity, elects those whom He foresees as believers. Those who are not among the elect have only themselves to blame. Essentially, this is the stand which Milton and Arminius took.

<sup>6</sup> James Orr, "Calvinism," Hastings' Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), III, 116. (This encyclopaedia will hereafter be referred to as H.E.R.E.)

exists today as a partially modified church of Calvinism. Therefore, the differentia of theological Calvinism must be sought in doctrine, not in polity.<sup>7</sup>

John Calvin (1509-1564) published, in 1536, his theological doctrine entitled the Institute of the Christian Religion, one of the truly remarkable books of his time. No book had previously appeared which took such a high rank as an exhibition of the doctrines of the Reformed churches. The Institute is by far the clearest and most able scientific exposition of the Reformation's theological ideas and beliefs that has been passed down to us.<sup>8</sup>

Like Augustine, Calvin pointed out in his Institute that the reformed theology, comprehensively considered, affirms the entire dependence of all things in nature and grace, in their being, ordering, and capacity for living a good life, on God. Man, then, was totally dependent on God for grace and salvation, really for everything.<sup>9</sup>

The most prominent and original features of Calvin's theological system, which have certainly left their impress upon the Reformed Creed, are the doctrines of predestination (free will versus election and reprobation) and the Lord's Supper.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1881), I, 118. Calvin's work Institute is usually referred to as Institutes; however, this is incorrect. Institutio christianae religionis is Latin for Institute (singular) of the Christian Religion.

<sup>9</sup>Orr, H.E.R.E., III, 118.

Basically, the writings of Calvinism assert the double predestination to life and death in direct disregard of merit, the central idea being that of an independent and immutable decree of God.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Calvinism was actually a Renaissance representative of the old Augustinian point of view, trying to exalt God and His glory at the expense of the dignity of man.<sup>11</sup>

Calvin's theological doctrines may be broadly summarized as follows: (1) God is a God of power, conceived as a king. (2) Hence, man's primary duty is to help in making the will of God prevail. (3) God's will can be discovered by studying the Bible. (4) However, this involves much mental work--hence the stress upon logical processes. The Bible supplies the premises; man must reason from them. (5) Human nature was corrupted by Adam's sin (the original sin), and man therefore inherits a totally depraved and sinful nature; even infants are sinful and thus subject to damnation. (6) Only through God's grace by means of the Atonement can man be saved. (7) This is the famous doctrine of election or predestination. God determines beforehand which individuals are to be saved, which condemned. The ones to be saved, or the "elect," discover their good fortune through the inner voice or the witness of the spirit who has come personally to them. The reprobate develop their evil natures through the agency of the Devil. (8) In theory, the Church

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<sup>10</sup>Schaff, p. 451.

<sup>11</sup>W. F. Thrall, Addison Hibbard and C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1962), p. 68. Also see Barnack, A History of Dogma, v, and Schaff, Creeds of Christendom, I.

and state are separate; however, the Church could "advise" the state.<sup>12</sup>

The essential doctrines of the system, the ones of major concern, are usually summed up in the famous five points of Calvinism.

Calvin felt that man was totally depraved and of a sinful nature and was thus naturally unable to exercise free will. He seemed to lay the initial blame for man's depravity at Adam's doorstep because Calvin felt that Adam had been given freedom of choice over good and evil by God; he had sinned, and as a result lost his freedom of will. Calvin said:

Therefore God provided man's soul with a mind, by which to distinguish good from evil, right from wrong. . . . To this he joined the will, under whose control is choice. . . . In this integrity man by free will had the power, if he so willed, to attain eternal life. . . . Adam could have stood if he wished . . . he fell solely by his own will.<sup>13</sup>

The five cardinal points of Calvinism--supplemented by Calvin's own statements from his Institute--as presented to the Synod of Dort by Calvin's followers, may be summarized in the following manner.

It was because of the fall and revolt of Adam that the whole human race was lowered from its original condition to the ranks of the depraved. Because Adam was unfaithful [to God], he sinned and as a result gave a heritage of corruption to all men. Man is thus totally depraved and cannot exercise free will.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 69. Calvin paraphrased by Thrall and Hibbard; italics are mine.

<sup>13</sup> Calvin, Institute of the Christian Religion, ed. by John T. McNeill, trans. by F. Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), II, 195-96.

Secondly, Calvin held that there was an unconditional election, which manifested itself through God's election of those to be saved, in spite of their inability to perform saving works as can be seen in his definition of the term predestination:

We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which he determined with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is fore-ordained for some, eternal damnation for others. . . . As Scripture, then, clearly shows, we say that God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive into salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction . . . election itself could not stand except as set over against reprobation. God is said to set apart those whom he adopts into salvation; it will be highly absurd to say that others acquire by chance or obtain by their own efforts what election alone confers on a few.<sup>14</sup>

The third of the famous five points states that prevenient and irresistible grace is made available in advance, but only to the elect. Here, Calvin refers to Paul and his epistle to the Romans as a means of clarifying his point about grace being given in advance to the elect. "Those whom he appointed beforehand, he also called: those whom he called, he also justified."<sup>15</sup>

The manner of the call itself clearly indicates that it is dependent on grace alone. God grants this grace only to the elect who through faith are saved by God. Faith is the work of election, but election, according to Calvin, does not depend upon faith.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 926, 931, and 947.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., Romans 8:30, Paul as quoted by Calvin, pp. 964-65.

Others . . . make election depend upon faith, as if it were doubtful and also ineffectual until confirmed by faith. Indeed, that it is confirmed with respect to us, is utterly plain. . . . For when Scripture teaches that we have illumined according as God has chosen us, what is more absurd and unworthy than for our eyes to be so dazzled by the brilliance of this light as to refuse to be mindful of election.<sup>16</sup>

The predetermined elect inevitably persevere in the path of holiness; this is usually referred to as simply the perseverance of the saints, or the fourth of Calvin's five points. In Calvin's opinion, Christ has assured His own people (elect) that their election is irrevocable and everlasting. Thus, under Christ's protection, the perseverance of the elect is certain.

The fact that, as we said, the firmness of our election is joined to our calling is another means of establishing our assurance. For those whom Christ has illumined with the knowledge of his name and has introduced into the bosom of his church, he is said to receive into his care and keeping.<sup>17</sup>

Man's sin was partially atoned for by Christ; this atonement, provided to the elect through the Holy Spirit, gives the elect the power to attempt to obey God's will as it is revealed in the Bible. In other words here, in his fifth point, Calvin held that man, because of Christ's sacrifice, could try to do God's will as revealed in the Bible. Of course, the "man" had to be of the "elect," which means that he already possessed God's grace. Christ's death, then, was the price of redemption for the elect, not for all people.

The above summary of the five points of Calvinism is by no means

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 967-68.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 971.



a complete or thorough treatment of Calvin's entire theology; however, these five points emphasize the main areas of Christian theology which the Remonstrants and later Milton were to reject.

### III

Strict Calvinists found various mitigations in the "Federal Theology" laid out by Cocceius (1603-1669), a professor at Leyden who introduced the idea that God's judicial charging of the guilt of Adam's apostasy to his descendants was racial, not personal. Even bolder disagreement was offered by the Remonstrants, led by Arminius (1560-1609), another professor at Leyden from 1602-1609.<sup>18</sup>

A year after Arminius' death (1609), his followers, by then an organized party, presented a "Remonstrance" to the States of Holland, pleading for toleration. This action led to the famous "Five Points, or Articles of the Remonstrance," in the controversy between Calvinism and Arminianism.<sup>19</sup>

Actually Arminius was in revolt against only certain aspects of Calvinism, but these aspects were to be of far-reaching importance in the history of the Reformed Theology. The setting was the early seventeenth century. The resulting situation was rigid with a new dogmatism, making a recoil inevitable.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Martin, "Predestination," H.E.R.E., X, 233.

<sup>19</sup>Schaff, I, 508, 510, 713.

<sup>20</sup>Frederic Platt, "Arminianism," H.E.R.E., I, 807.

The ideas of Arminius and Milton appear to stem from the more

conditional and non-absolutist theological teachings of the Greek Fathers and Boethius on some points, but more closely to the beliefs of the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians concerning man and his relationship to God.

The Greek Fathers, having dedicated themselves to this problem of whether or not to accept the doctrine of predestination, reached an ethical and reasonable solution. They decided to teach free will. (Harnack, "Predestination," H.E.R.E.)

Boethius' influence on medieval thought was at its greatest in his De consolations philosophic; in the Consolatio, Boethius dealt with the matters of free will and predestination, but he drew conclusions quite different from Paul and Augustine. Lady Philosophy (Boethius' mouth-piece) states that man does have a free will and is able to decide between right and wrong. (See Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, trans. by I. Teubner [1871], revised by H. F. Stewart [London: 1926], pp. 371, 405-07.) Note that Milton and the Remonstrants agree with Boethius concerning man's freedom of will and God's foreknowledge.

Few of the controversies which distracted the early Church are so full of perennial interest as that which raged over the teachings of the British monk Pelagius. Basically, the controversy was concerned with the age-long problem of free will, predestination and determinism--or, the relationship between God and man.

The chief theologian of Pelagianism was Julian of Eclanum. Pelagius and Coelestius had been concerned with arousing men's wills to worthier moral efforts. Julian's theology added nothing new to that of Pelagius. It was Julian who maintained such a vigorous controversy with Augustine. The content of his theology was essentially the gospel of free will. (For a concise eight point treatment of the Pelagian theology, see Harnack, V, 191-203, and R. O. Parsons, "Pelagianism," H.E.R.E., IX, 704.)

Around A.D. 426-27 there appeared in Carthage the contention which was soon to be recognized as the characteristic tenet of what its opposers were later to call Semi-Pelagianism. The Semi-Pelagians, according to John Cassian's doctrine of grace, held that grace was not irresistible, and that God's predestination is grounded on his foreknowledge of those who would accept or reject his grace. According to these Semi-Pelagians, man, if he wanted to be saved, must accept or reject God's goodness and mercy of his own free will. (See Harnack, V, 218; Harnack cites from Cassian's teaching as formulated in Collationes Patrum, xiii; also see Parsons, "Pelagianism," H.E.R.E., p. 709.

Calvin accepted Augustine's theology concerning predestination, but Arminius espoused his own doctrine which was considered heretical at first because it advocated a doctrine of free will. This Arminian dogma was accepted around the eighteenth century by the Church of England as being completely orthodox. It was similar in many ways to the doctrine of Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians.

The creed of the Arminians was set forth in the five Arminian articles, or the Remonstrance, which was addressed to the States General of Holland and West Friesland in 1618. This assembly is known as the Synod of Dort.

The largest and, next to the Westminster Assembly, the most imposing of all synods of the Reformed Churches, the Synod of Dort was called by the States General of the Netherlands at the insistence of the Calvinists to try to settle the dispute between the latter and the Remonstrants, as the Arminian followers were then called. This Synod met at Dort, an island in the Meuse, on November 13, 1618, and adjourned May 9, 1619.<sup>21</sup>

Because many of the representatives were late in arriving, the first sessions were devoted to discussion of a new translation of the Bible. Not until December 6 and the twenty-second session was the main business of the gathering reached. The Remonstrants were told that they could merely express their opinions and the Synod would pronounce judgment.

Of course, the Remonstrants immediately protested. Episcopius, one of the Arminian representatives, informed the Synod that his delegation would not submit to any human power or belief, but only to the word of God in the Holy Scriptures. The Calvinist delegates decided, however, that the Remonstrants were at the Synod only to defend their

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<sup>21</sup>H. C. Rogge, "The Synod of Dort," New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1900), III, 494.

beliefs; the Synod would decide the outcome.<sup>22</sup>

The five Arminian articles had originally been drawn up by a man named Uytenbogaert and were then signed by forty-six ministers. The Remonstrants submitted to the Synod written statements defending each of their five articles. The States General ruled in favor of the Synod concerning the matter on Arminian freedom to criticize the convictions and practices of their opponents. This freedom of speech was denied to the Remonstrants; they refused to submit and, as a result, were expelled from the Synod.

In the 125th session, the Synod voted that the five articles of the Remonstrants were contrary to the doctrine of the Reformed Church, and that their objections to the Confession and the Catechism were not supported by the authority of Scripture. A committee was appointed to express the final decision in the form of canons. The doctrine of absolute predestination was maintained, though certainly not acceptable to the supralapsarians. The Synod finally decided to depose the Remonstrants from their position.<sup>23</sup>

For two centuries the decision of the Synod of Dort was the basis of the Reformed Church in Holland, and the Canones Dordrocenses gave it a peculiar character, for what they stated concerning predestination

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 494-95.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., the Confession and the Catechism referred to here are the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, which were adopted along with the five Calvinistic canons by the Synod of Dort. See Schaff, 1, 514.

differed as much from Calvin's Institute as from the Helvetic Confession.<sup>24</sup>

The Remonstrance is first negative, stating the five Calvinistic articles only so the Arminians could reject them, and then positive, stating the five main points of their belief. Following are the positions, in general, which the Arminians agreed on:

- (1) The first asserts conditional election, or election dependent on the foreknowledge by God of faith in the "elect" and of unbelief in those who are left in sin and under condemnation without hope of redemption.
- (2) Their second point emphasizes universal atonement in the sense that it is intended, although it is not actually efficient, for all.
- (3) Man is unable to exercise saving faith or to do good without regeneration by the Holy Spirit.
- (4) Fourthly, they hold that the grace of God is indispensable in every step of the spiritual life, but that it is not irresistible.
- (5) The fifth article asserts that the grace of the Holy Spirit is sufficient for continual victory over temptation; however, the necessity of the final Perseverance of all believers is doubtful.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 494-95.

<sup>25</sup>Platt, "Arminianism," H.E.R.E., I, 608; the five Arminian

Whereas Augustinianism emphasized the glory of God even at the expense of man, and Pelagianism asserted man's original innocence and self-dependence, Arminianism insisted upon the part both God and man must play in human redemption.<sup>26</sup>

The Arminians, concerning the issues of predestination (election and reprobation), felt that the Calvinistic views were ethically inadequate. The principle of the election of grace is maintained; and, the Divine will is also completely supreme, but its supremacy is moral. The Divine decree, however, whether elective or reprobatory, is entirely conditional.

In other words, God elected to salvation or to reprobation only those whose faith or final disbelief, as is the case of the reprobate, He foresaw. This Divine foreknowledge and foresight logically preceded the Divine volitions; it certainly is not an inference from them. Foresight, on God's part, is not necessitative, but instead, intuitive. Arminianism can thus be classified, generally speaking of course, as a meditating system through and through. Not absolutism, as can be seen in Calvinism, but conditionalism is its most characteristic feature.<sup>27</sup>

In his Declaration of Sentiments Arminius delved deeply into the controversy over the issues of predestination. He first explained what

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articles, as they were presented to the Synod of Dort, are dealt with more fully in Chapter II of this thesis, pp. 22-26.

<sup>26</sup> Thrall and Hibbard, p. 68.

<sup>27</sup> Schaff, III, 546-47.

was being taught on the matter and then declared his own views and thoughts on the same subject.<sup>28</sup>

I. The First absolute decree of God concerning the salvation of sinful man, is that by which he decreed to appoint his son, Jesus Christ, for a Mediator . . . who might destroy sin by his own death, might by his obedience obtain the salvation which had been lost, and might communicate it by his own virtue.

II. The Second precise and absolute decree of God, is that in which he decreed to receive into favor those who repent and believe . . . but to leave in sin, and under wrath, all impenitent persons and unbelievers, and to damn them as aliens from Christ.

III. The Third divine decree is that by which God decreed to administer in a sufficient and efficacious manner the means which were necessary for repentance and faith. . . .

IV. . . . the Fourth decree, by which God decreed to save and damn certain particular persons. . . . God knew from all eternity those individuals who would . . . believe, and through his subsequent grace would persevere . . . he likewise knew those who would not believe and persevere.<sup>29</sup>

Hence, according to Arminius, God's law (or laws) governing man were conditional, and by no means absolute. Man has a freedom to choose between right and wrong. If he chose wrong, God would damn him eternally. If man decided to do what was right, which incidentally he wasn't forced to do, then he could be saved.

In England, there was evidence of "Arminian" (Pelagian) thought long before the time of Arminius and his system. The influence of this thought can be seen in the comprehensiveness of the Articles of the English Church. In a way, men such as Latimer, Hooper, Andrews, and

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<sup>28</sup> James Arminius, Declaration of Sentiments: from The Works of James Arminius, trans. by James Nichols (Buffalo, 1853), I, 211.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., I, 217-18, italics are mine.

Hooker might have been classed as "Arminians"; however, Arminianism was not in vogue as an organized system when these men were writing.<sup>30</sup>

Arminianism suffered an eclipse when civil war came to England, but it returned with prelacy at the Restoration. From this time forward, its influence was notable in the Anglican Church for more than fifty years.<sup>31</sup>

#### IV

The discussion up to this point has consisted mainly of background material to give a reasonable knowledge and understanding of the theological and historical aspects of predestination as they confronted John Milton in the mid-seventeenth century. Calvinism and Arminianism had squared off at each other on more than one point, but especially concerning predestination. Milton, generally thought of as a Puritan, chose the side of the Arminians on this matter concerning predestination. In proceeding, we will take a close look at Milton's personal convictions regarding the doctrine of predestination as set forth by him in The Christian Doctrine and in Paradise Lost and show just how distinctly Arminian his views were.

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<sup>30</sup>Flatt, H.E.H.E., I, 810-11.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.



## CHAPTER II

### MILTON AND THE ARMINIAN IDEAS OF THE SYNOD OF DORT

This chapter will document and explain the relations illustrated between Arminianism and Milton as demonstrated in the appendix located at the back of this thesis.

Various allusions have been made to Milton's Arminianism in The Christian Doctrine and Paradise Lost, such as the ones made by Kelley. Kelley and Henry are indeed correct in stating that Milton's theology, especially concerning the divine decrees, is Arminian in nature. Heretofore, however, no really detailed comparison has been made which included the ideas expressed by Milton in Christian Doctrine and the five Arminian articles, presented by the Remonstrants in protest of the five points of Calvinism. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to make a comparison of Milton's theological ideas and the beliefs professed by the Remonstrants (Arminians). By stating the five Calvinistic points, one to a section, it will be much easier to indicate and illustrate the similarities that exist between the Arminian articles and Milton's theology. Proceeding in this manner, one can see, for example, not only how Milton and the Remonstrants agree on the doctrine of conditional predestination but also how each disagrees with the Calvinistic doctrine of total depravity. In short, the purpose of this chapter is to compare Calvinism, Arminianism, and Milton as expressed in Christian Doctrine, not to prove that Milton and the Remonstrants agree on the five Arminian

articles or to prove that Milton and the Arminians oppose Calvinism; the latter is apparent from other works. This chapter will show why scholars and theologians refer to Milton's Christian Doctrine and Paradise Lost as Arminian.

In 1937 Maurice Kelley made a comparison of the conception of predestination and free will in Milton's The Christian Doctrine and Paradise Lost with these ideas issued forth in The Westminster Confession. Because of his findings in this comparison, he concluded that concerning the doctrine of free will both of Milton's works were not Calvinistic but Arminian in nature.<sup>32</sup>

Kelley states in This Great Argument that The Christian Doctrine professes Remonstrant (Arminian) views and that Paradise Lost expresses the Arminian dogma of The Christian Doctrine, rather than the orthodox Calvinism found in the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce.<sup>33</sup>

Kelley seems accurate when he classifies Milton's theology in Christian Doctrine and Paradise Lost as Arminian, but he does not give the reader any comparison of Arminius and Milton, so that he (the reader) can see the similarities for himself. To confirm accurately Milton's Arminian tendencies, especially concerning the divine decrees (free will and predestination), the areas of agreement between Milton and Arminius

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<sup>32</sup>Maurice Kelley, "Theological Dogma of Paradise Lost," PMLA, LII (1937), 72-77. Henry seems right in assuming that Milton's theology was Arminian and therefore heterodox in the seventeenth century. See Henry, Milton's Puritanism, p. 236.

<sup>33</sup>ibid.; This Great Argument (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 15, 19.

must be indicated and then contrasted with the five points of Calvinism, which both men so fully rejected. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to compare Milton's theology with the Arminians' theology, especially the five points of Arminianism, by showing how the two agree with each other, yet contrast with the five basic points of Calvinism.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the theology expounded by Calvin in his Institute and the five cardinal points of Calvinism, accepted at the Synod of Dort in 1618, were considered as the orthodox theology of the Reformed churches. Thus, by revolting against the strict Calvinistic doctrine, Milton and Arminius were certainly heterodox and could have been convicted on grounds of heresy.

However, by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries toleration in the varied theologies of the Reformed churches was more common. Many of Arminius' teachings, the very same ideas which Milton had accepted, heretofore heterodox, became completely orthodox; in other words, the theological doctrine of the eighteenth and nineteenth century Anglican Church was Arminian.<sup>34</sup>

In Chapter One of this paper, the beliefs and ideas of John Calvin were discussed at some length. At the Synod of Dort, in 1618,

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<sup>34</sup> Bishop Sumner, although he did recognize Milton's views on the divine decrees (especially concerning predestination and free will) as being Arminian, felt that the theology in The Christian Doctrine was completely orthodox. Among many others, David Nasson followed Sumner in regarding Milton as orthodox. Neither, apparently due to changes in Church toleration, recognized Milton's unorthodoxy. See Nasson, The Life of John Milton, IV, 823; also see Henry, Milton's Puritanism, p. 236.

Calvin's followers had presented to the Synod five points which they felt should be unconditionally accepted and adhered to as the orthodox belief. These points are usually referred to as the five cardinal points of Calvinism, or in their accepted form, the "Calvinistic" canons of Dort. The Synod unanimously accepted the five points of Calvinism and rejected the five articles of Arminianism, which had caused such a stir. Section I of Chapter Two will deal with the doctrine of "total depravity"; each of the remaining four sections of the chapter will discuss one of the five points which the Synod of Dort tried unsuccessfully to settle in favor of Calvin, unsuccessful in that the Arminians and Milton rejected them.

## I

To Calvin, "total depravity" meant that man was endowed with a wholly sinful mind and nature even before creation. Man was unable to exercise free will; instead he was ruled by God's unchangeable decree of foreordination. Adam could distinguish between good and evil, but he willed to do evil. Because of this mankind was lowered to depravity, and deprived forever of his free will.<sup>35</sup> Because man's fall was not only foreknown but also foreordained, God also elected a certain few to eternal life and left the rest of mankind to be eternally damned. God's divine decree of predestination--election and reprobation--stood, regardless of merit or demerit. The efforts of man were unimportant.

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<sup>35</sup>Calvin's Institute, II, 195. See Chapter I, p. 8 in this thesis.

God is said to set apart those whom he adopts into salvation; it will be highly absurd to say that others acquire by chance or obtain by their own efforts what election alone confers on a few.<sup>36</sup>

From Calvin's works and preachings his followers molded together the theology of Calvinism. As presented at the Synod of Dort, the Calvinists' first point states:

That God has, before the fall, and even before the creation of man, by an unchangeable decree, foreordained some to eternal life and others to eternal damnation, without any regard to righteousness [merit] or sin, to obedience or disobedience, and simply because it so pleased him, in order to show the glory of his righteousness to the one class and his mercy to the other.<sup>37</sup>

This was the position on "total depravity" which the Synod of Dort accepted as orthodox, even in all its minute detail concerning election and reprobation.

The followers of Arminius, known as Remonstrants by the time of the Synod, rejected Calvinism's doctrine of total depravity, classifying it as supralapsarian in outlook. Generally speaking, Arminianism is a meditating system; its most characteristic feature is conditionalism, not absolutism as may be seen in Calvinism.<sup>38</sup>

The first of the five articles of the Remonstrants directly

<sup>36</sup> Calvin's Institute, II, 947.

<sup>37</sup> Philip Schaff, Creeds of Christendom (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1877), I, 517. Note particularly how the Remonstrants first stated the Calvinistic points (five cardinal points) only to reject them in their five articles.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., III, 546-47; also I, 515-16.

opposes the Calvinistic belief in that it is concerned with

Conditional Predestination. - God has immutably decreed, from eternity, to save those men, who by the grace of the Holy Spirit, believe in Jesus Christ, and by the same grace persevere in the obedience of faith to the end; and, on the other hand, to condemn the unbelievers and unconverted (John iii.36).

Election and condemnation are thus conditioned by fore-knowledge, and made dependent on the foreseen faith or unbelief of men.<sup>39</sup>

God foreknew that man would fall, held the Arminians, but He did not ordain or necessitate man's fall; neither did He, by absolute and unchangeable decree, elect some men to salvation and others to damnation. If man, by God's grace, believed in Christ and persevered in his faith, he could be saved. The Arminians, in other words, placed importance on the actions and will of man, especially in his relationship to God; the Calvinists did not do this. With them (Calvinists), man's fate was decided before he was even born; he was absolutely predestinated to heaven or hell.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, the Arminians felt that God elected to salvation or to damnation only those whose faith or final disbelief (as would be the case of the reprobate) He foresaw. This Divine foreknowledge and foresight logically preceded the Divine volitions; foresight on God's part is not

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<sup>39</sup>First article of the Remonstrance, as presented to the Synod of Dort by the Remonstrants, Ibid., I, 517; italics are mine.

<sup>40</sup>Conditionalism, especially as it concerns predestination and free will opposed to Calvinistic absolutism, is one of the main areas of agreement between Milton's theology and that of the Remonstrants, or Arminians.

necessitative but intuitive.<sup>11</sup>

Milton's ideas concerning Calvin's doctrine of "total depravity" agreed with those of the Arminians. He bluntly rejected it; Milton in no way could accept the Calvinistic doctrine of absolute predestination. He agreed with the Arminians on conditional predestination.

Man is depraved because of the sin of Adam and Eve in disobeying God's command; the law of sin was bred in man just as it dwelt in Adam after the fall. Thus, Milton did conceive of the sinful and depraved nature of man:

This depravity was engendered in us by our first parents . . . those even who are born of regenerate parents; for faith though it takes away the personal imputation of guilt, does not altogether remove indwelling sin. . . . Christ alone was exempt from this contagion. . . .<sup>12</sup>

Milton emphasizes free will in man; he accepted the idea that God had blessed man with freedom of will, or the ability to choose between right and wrong. God, then, must have ruled by merit.

Many there be that complain of divine Providence for suffering Adam to transgress: Foolish tongues! when God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose [i.e., free will], for reason is choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam. . . .<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Schaff, III, 546-47.

<sup>12</sup> John Milton, Christian Doctrine, Columbia Edition (1934), XV, 195-97; for an additional statement by Milton concerning man's depraved nature, see C. E., XVI, 103. From here forward the Columbia Edition will be cited simply as C. E.

<sup>13</sup> ibid., Arcopagitica, C. E., p. 319; for additional material on Milton's conception of predestination and man's will see Paradise Lost, C. E., V, 525-34. God left man's nature and will free, not overruled by fate. He requires our voluntary service. Man was free to do good or evil.

Just as Arminius had done before him, Milton revolted against Calvin's "decretum horribile" of predestination absolute, or the idea that salvation and damnation were handed out in the form of a sentence, by God, without regard to good deeds or bad deeds.<sup>44</sup> Milton in no uncertain terms rejected the Calvinistic belief that man, even before creation, was placed either with the elect or with the reprobate.

For we might argue thus: If God have at all events decreed my salvation, however I may act, I shall not perish. But God has also decreed as the means of salvation that you should act rightly. Thus, deeds are influential on man's chances of salvation. I cannot, therefore, but act rightly . . . some time . . . since God has so decreed--in the mean time I will do as I please; if I never act rightly, it will be seen that I was never predestined to salvation, and that whatever good I might have done would have been to no purpose. . . . Nor do we imagine anything unworthy of God, when we assert that those conditional events depend on the human will, which God himself has chosen to place at the free disposal of man . . . the liberty [freedom] of man must be considered entirely independent of necessity.<sup>45</sup>

God, then, does not decide man's fate out of necessity; neither does he judge man without regard to merit. Milton, like Arminius, felt that God foresaw man's disobedience; He knew that man would sin and fall. But God left man's will free. Man had to choose for himself between good and evil; he had either to accept and believe in Christ or to reject Him.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Martin A. Larson, The Modernity of Milton (New York: University of Chicago Press, 1927), p. 89.

<sup>45</sup>Milton, Christian Doctrine, C. E., XIV, 71, 73, 75, 77; italics are mine.

<sup>46</sup>Kelley, This Great Argument, pp. 77-79. Also see Christian Doctrine, C. E., XIV, 63-67, and Paradise Lost, V, ll. 525-34, 469-72,



Milton felt that God offered the chance of salvation to every man; but this offer was issued with the understanding that certain conditions were necessary. Predestination, then, was conditional; in order to be saved man must believe and have faith in Christ, and he must persevere in that faith (or continue in his faith). As mentioned before, this idea is in perfect harmony with the Arminian belief. In Christian Doctrine, Milton wrote that

. . . This condition is invariably attached to the decree . . . It seems then that there is no particular predestination or election, but only general--or in other words, that the privilege /of election to salvation/ belongs to all who heartily believe and continue in their belief,--that none are predestinated or elected irrespectively. . . .

This is most explicitly declared by the whole of Scripture, which offers salvation and eternal life equally to all, under the condition of obedience in the Old Testament and of faith in the New.<sup>47</sup>

The Calvinistic doctrine of absolute predestination was in conflict with Milton's (and Arminius') conception of the nature of God and His ideas on human nature. To Milton absolute predestination involved an altogether unjust and unmerciful condemnation of the reprobate. It forced man's spiritual fortunes to rely too heavily on an arbitrary determination of the Divine will. God, then, was perfectly just and merciful, incapable of arbitrarily condemning man to heaven or hell

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and 501-05: Adam is warned of his fall; it is in man's will to freely love God or not to love him. In Paradise Lost, III, ll. 98-125, God even foresees the fall of man.

<sup>47</sup>Milton, C. E., XIV, 107-09; italics are mine.

simply according to numbers.<sup>48</sup> Milton had the following to say in regard to election and reprobation, the points which Calvin held as being so vital:

Predestination . . . must always be understood with reference to election, and seems often to be used instead of the latter term. . . . Reprobation, therefore, could not be included under predestination.

I do not understand by the term election that general or national election, by which God chose the whole nation of Israel. . . . But that special election is here intended, which is nearly synonymous with eternal predestination. Election, therefore, is not a part of predestination; much less then is reprobation. For, speaking accurately, the ultimate purpose of predestination is salvation of believers . . . whereas the object which reprobation has in view is the destruction of unbelievers . . . whence it is clear that God could never have predestinated reprobation . . .<sup>49</sup>

After comparing Milton's ideas on election and reprobation with those of the Arminians, it may appear to the reader that the two disagree. However, this is not true. Notice that both theologians used the terms in connection with the availability of salvation. Both Milton and Arminius reach a mutual conclusion--conditionalism. To be of the elect, or to attain salvation, man must believe, and persevere in his faith. Thus any apparent difference between Milton and Arminius on the doctrine of total depravity is purely connotative. Both men share the same over-all belief concerning this doctrine.

If man does not believe, have faith, and persevere, then he will

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<sup>48</sup> Arthur E. Barker, Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, 1641-1660 (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1942), pp. 308-09. Also see Christian Doctrine, C. E., XIV, 103.

<sup>49</sup> Milton, C. E., XIV, 98-99.

be damned; however, this is man's fault, not God's. God's condemnation of unbelievers is perfectly right and just, since He mercifully bestowed reason and free will on man.

. . . And . . . the gift of reason has been implanted in all, by which they may of themselves resist bad desires, so that no one can complain of, or allege in excuse, the depravity of his own nature compared with that of others . . . [i. e., depravity is no excuse].<sup>50</sup>

## II

According to Calvin, then, it was because of Adam's transgression against God that man could no longer exercise his free will. In condemnation of Adam and Eve and their future children, God ordained or decreed to exclude a select group of men from the consequences of the fall. This group, called the "elect" by Calvin, was to be saved by God's free grace or "unlimited grace." But the rest of mankind [the reprobate], God would leave doomed, regardless of their age or merits.

. . . For all are not created in equal condition [with equal chances]; rather eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others . . . it will be . . . absurd to say that others [the reprobate] acquire by chance or obtain by their own efforts what election alone confers on a few.<sup>51</sup>

The followers of Calvin claimed that God's grace was unlimited; thus the second point as presented by the Calvinists at the Synod of Dort is usually referred to as the doctrine of "unlimited grace." As

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 131; italics are mine.

<sup>51</sup> Calvin's Institute, pp. 95-96; italics are mine. See Chapter I, pp. 9-10 in this thesis.

it was presented to the Synod it read

That God, in view of the fall, and in just condemnation of our first parents and their posterity, ordained to exempt a part of mankind from the consequences of the fall, and to save them [the elect] by his free grace, but to leave the rest [the reprobate], without regard to age or moral condition, to their condemnation, for the glory of his righteousness.<sup>52</sup>

Calvin professes to have believed in unlimited grace from God, but actually his second point advocates a limited grace. To be sure, the elect or chosen of God were given unlimited grace, but the reprobate were not. Calvin, however, felt that grace was unlimited to the elect, who were to be saved anyway. As pointed out above, Calvin thought it was ridiculous to say that men not of the elect could obtain salvation, through God's grace, simply by their own efforts or merits.<sup>53</sup>

The Arminians rejected the Calvinist doctrine of unlimited grace. They felt that Christ died for everyone and that His grace was offered to all people, not just a few. Although God's grace was offered to mankind in sufficient quantity to give all men the chance of salvation, the efficacy of God's grace depended on the individual man himself.<sup>54</sup>

The second Arminian article as presented to the Synod of Dort concerned

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<sup>52</sup>The second of the five cardinal points of Calvinism as presented at the Synod of Dort and rejected by the Arminians, Schaff, I, 517.

<sup>53</sup>Calvin obviously did not believe in "unlimited" grace to all people, only to God's elect. Arminius and Milton believed in universal or infinite grace to all men.

<sup>54</sup>See Chapter II, p. 17, in this paper for Arminius' statement of the third divine decree [of God], in which God decreed to administer in a sufficient and efficacious manner the means [i.e., His grace] which were necessary for repentance and faith.

Universal Atonement. - Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all men and for every man, and his grace is extended to all [not just to the elect]. His stoning sacrifice is in and of itself sufficient for the redemption of the whole world, and is intended for all by God the Father. But its inherent sufficiency does not necessarily imply its actual efficiency.  
 . . .<sup>55</sup>

Unlike the Calvinists, Arminius' followers held that God's grace could be rejected or resisted; thus, man who is condemned is responsible through his own free choice. Those who accept God's grace, by faith, will be saved.

The grace of God may be resisted, and only those who accept it [grace] by faith are actually saved. He who is lost, is lost by his own guilt (John iii.16; I John 11.2).<sup>56</sup>

The Arminians agree partially with the orthodox belief in holding the doctrine of a vicarious or expiatory atonement, in opposition to the Socinians. But in the Arminian system

God may [at any time] . . . enter into a new covenant with men, under which pardon is conveyed to all men on condition of repentance and faith. The immediate effect of Christ's death was not the salvation, but only the salvability of sinners by the removal of legal obstacles, and opening the door for pardon and reconciliation. . . .<sup>57</sup>

In agreement with the Arminians' second article and in rejection of Calvin's doctrine of unlimited grace, Hilton felt that God's grace and mercy were universal and unlimited, not "unlimited" to just "an elect group" but unlimited to all the people God created.

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<sup>55</sup>Schaff, I, 518; the second Arminian article as presented to the Synod of Dort; italics are mine.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.; italics are mine.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.; italics are mine.

If God be said to have predestinated men only on condition that they believe and continue in the faith, predestination will not be altogether of grace, but must depend on the will and belief of mankind; which is derogatory to the exclusive efficacy of divine grace. I maintain on the contrary that . . . it [grace] is thus placed in a much clearer light than by the theory of those who make the objection for the grace of God is seen to be infinite . . .<sup>58</sup>

Milton goes on to state three basic reasons why he thinks God's grace is infinite.

. . . in the first place, by his showing any pity at all for man whose fall was to happen through his own fault. Secondly, by his "so loving the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" for its salvation. Thirdly, by his granting us again the power of volition, that is, of acting freely, in consequence of recovering the liberty of the will by renewing of the Spirit.<sup>59</sup>

God, Milton believed, rejected only the unbelievers, or people who would not accept Him; He did not reject anyone else.

If then God reject none but the disobedient and unbelieving, he undoubtedly gives grace to all, if not in equal measures at least sufficient for attaining knowledge of the truth and final salvation.<sup>60</sup>

Like Arminius, Milton held that Christ died for the benefit of mankind in general, not for the elect only. Neither the Christian Doctrine nor the Racovian Catechism uses the word atonement in their treatment of the redemption of mankind. However, this omission does not mean that Milton did not accept the fact that Christ died for the sins

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<sup>58</sup>Milton, C. E., XIV, 138-39; italics are mine.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., XIV, 147; also see Paradise Lost, C. E., III, ll. 183-

of all mankind.<sup>61</sup> In the Christian Doctrine Milton wrote that

CHRIST'S SACERDOTAL FUNCTION IS THAT WHEREBY HE ONCE OFFERED HIMSELF TO GOD THE FATHER AS A SACRIFICE FOR SINNERS, AND HAS ALWAYS MADE, AND STILL CONTINUES TO MAKE INTERCESSION FOR US . . . the ransom he has paid is in itself sufficient for the redemption of all mankind, all are called to partake of its benefits. . . .<sup>62</sup>

Thus, Milton too felt that the atoning sacrifice was sufficient to redeem the world and everyone in it. But he held that the choice was man's. And this is one of the most characteristic features of Miltonic and Arminian disagreement with Calvinism. Man as a free agent had to make a choice of his own free will between good and evil; God's grace was sufficient for all men, but its efficiency depended on whether or not the free agent chose to believe in God and Christ, thus accepting God's grace, or to reject God.

With the understanding that Universal Atonement refers to Christ's sacrifice for the sins of man, Milton agrees completely with the Arminians in this area of theology. Obviously, both rejected the Calvinistic doctrines of a limited atonement and irresistible grace.<sup>63</sup>

Because the Miltonic and Arminian theologies disagree basically with the Calvinistic ideas on the divine decrees, predestination and free will especially, the reader must understand what is meant by pre-

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<sup>61</sup>Henry, p. 289. Milton certainly does believe that Christ died for the sins of all mankind. He agrees with the Remonstrants on their idea of universal atonement.

<sup>62</sup>Milton, C. E., XV, 291, 349; capitals are Milton's.

<sup>63</sup>The doctrines of limited atonement and irresistible grace will be dealt with more fully in Section III, Chapter II, especially as they concern Calvin vs. Milton.

destination as defined by Calvin, Arminius, and Milton.

Calvin understood predestination to be . . . God's eternal decree, by which he determined with himself what he willed to become of each man. . . . As scripture then clearly shows, we say that God once established by his eternal . . . plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive into salvation, and those whom . . . he would devote to destruction . . . election . . . set over against reprobation. . . .<sup>64</sup>

Note Calvin's complete reliance on God's will and his determination of man, and his adherence to the idea of God's eternal and unchangeable plan which resulted in the election and reprobation of man regardless of merit.

Arminius defines predestination in the following manner:

Predestination . . . as it regards to the thing itself is the decree of the good pleasure of God in Christ, by which he resolved within himself from all eternity to justify, adopt, and endow with everlasting life, to the praise of his own glorious grace, believers on whom he had decreed to bestow faith.<sup>65</sup>

If not read very carefully, Arminius' definition of predestination can easily be misunderstood, especially the last sentence. He means that God decreed to bestow faith on those men who would believe in Him.

Milton felt that

The principal special decree of God relating to man is termed Predestination, where by God in pity to Mankind, through foreseeing that they men would fall of their own accord free will to choose, predestinated to eternal salvation before the foundation of the world those who should believe and continue in the faith; for a manifestation of the

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<sup>64</sup>Calvin's Institute, pp. 926-31, italics are mine.

<sup>65</sup>See Arminius, Declaration of Sentiments, p. 211; Arminius as quoted by Henry, p. 308.



glory of His mercy, grace and wisdom according to his purpose in Christ.<sup>66</sup>

There is only one minor difference between Milton's definition of predestination and that of Arminius. Arminius dates God's decree "from all eternity," whereas Milton dates his only before the world's foundation. Otherwise, the definitions agree on every major point.<sup>67</sup> Both Arminius and Milton regard predestination as being a good and merciful decree from God. God's purpose in Christ was to make it possible for man to aspire to salvation through belief, faith, and good works. Election and reprobation were not nearly so important as the relationship of God and man to each other.<sup>68</sup>

By referring to the above definitions of predestination, it becomes more evident that conditionalism (mercy, grace, and wisdom) is the key word in Miltonic and Arminian theology, whereas absolutism (God's arbitrary will and the total unimportance of man) adequately describes the Calvinistic position.

### III

The third section of Chapter II will deal with the Calvinistic doctrine of limited atonement, the Arminian idea about saving faith, and

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<sup>66</sup>Milton, C. E., XIV, 91; italics are mine.

<sup>67</sup>Henry, p. 309.

<sup>68</sup>See Chapter II, Section I in this thesis for discussion of Milton's ideas on election and reprobation. Note how strongly he emphasizes faith and belief and good works as important in the overall plan for man's salvation.

Milton's conception of limited atonement and saving faith.

In the opinion of Calvin, Jesus died only so that the elect could be saved. As a result, the sacrifice of Christ or the atonement was limited in nature, since it did not apply to all men. The Calvinistic belief on the doctrine of limited atonement is the third basic point of Calvinism. It advocated

That Christ died, not for all men, but only for the elect.<sup>69</sup>

Milton and Arminius, as clearly illustrated in section II of this paper, rejected the idea of a limited atonement. Both felt that Christ's sacrifice had the purpose of universal atonement. Christ, then, died for the sins of all men, not just for those of the elect.<sup>70</sup> As brought out in the second Arminian article,

They reject the doctrine of a limited atonement, which is connected with the supralapsarian view of predestination, but is disowned by moderate Calvinists, who differ from the Arminians in all other points.<sup>71</sup>

In their third article, the Remonstrants (Arminians) dealt with the concept of saving faith. They felt that man by himself did not have the saving grace or faith to think, will, or do any good works.

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<sup>69</sup>The third cardinal point of Calvinism as presented to the Synod of Dort. It is in this form that the Remonstrance rejected the Calvinistic doctrine of limited atonement, Schaff, I, 517.

<sup>70</sup>See pp. 31, 32, and 33 in Section II this chapter; note later how Milton's main disagreement with Calvin reverts back to his own basic conception of election and reprobation as opposed to Calvin's. See C. E., IV, 327.

<sup>71</sup>Schaff, I, 518; from the second Arminian article as stated by the Remonstrants at the Synod of Dort. They refers to the Arminians.

To enable him to think, will, and effect what is good, according to the word of Jesus, man must be born again of God in Christ, through his Holy Spirit--that is, man must be regenerated.

Man in his fallen state is unable to accomplish any thing really and truly good, and therefore also unable to attain to saving faith, unless he be regenerated and renewed by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit (John xv.5).<sup>72</sup>

Milton also felt that in order for man to do good works or to be able to attain saving faith, he must be regenerated by God in Christ.

The effects of regeneration are Repentance and Faith. REPENTANCE . . . IS THE GIFT OF GOD, WHEREBY THE REGENERATE MAN PERCEIVING WITH SORROW THAT HE HAS OFFENDED GOD BY SIN, DETESTS AND AVOIDS IT, HUMBLY TURNING TO GOD THROUGH A SENSE OF THE DIVINE MERCY, AND HEARTILY STRIVING TO FOLLOW RIGHT-ROUSNESS.<sup>73</sup>

Concerning the steps of repentance, Milton said

. . . we may distinguish certain progressive steps in repentance; namely, conviction of sin, contrition, confession, departure from evil, conversion to good: all which . . . belong likewise in their respective degrees to the repentance of the unregenerate.<sup>74</sup>

Milton goes on to say that the other effect of regeneration is Saving Faith.

SAVING FAITH IS A FULL PERSUASION OPERATED IN US THROUGH THE GIFT OF GOD, WHEREBY WE BELIEVE, ON THE SOLE AUTHORITY OF THE PROMISE ITSELF, THAT WHATSOEVER THINGS HE HAS PROMISED IN CHRIST ARE OURS, AND ESPECIALLY THE GRACE OF ETERNAL LIFE.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.; Milton had similar beliefs concerning saving faith.

<sup>73</sup>Milton, C. E., XV, 379. Capitals are Milton's, italics are mine.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 385; italics are mine.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 393. Capitals are Milton's, italics are mine.

Man will be regenerated or renewed by God if man will only believe in Jesus Christ. If man complies with these conditions set up by God, then he can attain salvation by doing good works because

. . . Christ has made satisfaction . . . for all. So far indeed is this satisfaction from regarding the elect alone, as is commonly believed, to the exclusion of sinners in general, that the very contrary is the case; it regards all sinners whatever, and it regards them expressly as sinners. . . . So far, therefore, as regards the satisfaction of Christ, and our conformity to his humiliation, the restoration of man is of merit; in which sense those texts are to be understood which convey a notion of recompense and reward. . . . it is faith that justifies, but a faith not destitute of works: and in like manner, if we deserve anything, if there be any worthiness in us on any ground whatever, it is God that hath made us worthy in Christ.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, Milton, like Arminius, held that man is helpless without God; but God through His infinite and divine mercy and grace will renew or regenerate man in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, if man does not reject God of his own accord. Milton felt that if man repented, believed, and did good works, he could then aspire to saving faith; this applies to all men, not just a few.<sup>77</sup>

#### IV

The fourth cardinal point of Calvinism rejected by the Remon-

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<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 327, 337-39. Italics are mine. See Paradise Lost, C. E., XII, ll. 420-30, pp. 393-94 for additional material concerning Milton's ideas on faith not being destitute of works. Man must not reject God if he wants salvation.

<sup>77</sup>See Paradise Lost, C. E., III, pp. 83-84 for emphasis of Milton's belief that God will renew or regenerate man (save him) by His (God's) grace.

strants at the Synod of Dort was in essence the doctrine of irresistible grace. The Calvinists felt that prevenient and irresistible grace was made available in advance, but only to the elect. God's call is dependent on grace alone; God bestows this grace only upon the elect who through faith are saved by God. To Calvin, faith is the work of election, but election by no means depends upon faith. Again Calvin's absolutism is obvious. Grace [of God], then, is irresistible to God's chosen; they must accept it and indeed cannot resist it. On the other hand, the reprobate cannot accept it; God's grace is not theirs to resist or accept.<sup>78</sup>

The doctrine of irresistible grace as presented to the Synod reads:

That the Holy Spirit works in the elect by irresistible grace, so that they must be converted and be saved; while the grace necessary and sufficient for conversion, faith, and salvation is withheld from the rest, although they are externally called and invited by the revealed will of God.<sup>79</sup>

The elect, according to the orthodox, or Calvinist, must, out of necessity be converted and saved because God willed it. Man had no say in the matter of his salvation one way or another. His will was a slave to God's will and he (man) could not resist God's grace as long as he was of the elect. And although God externally calls "the rest" [the reprobate], there will be insufficient grace for conversion, and too little faith for salvation. So, obviously, Calvin doesn't believe in

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<sup>78</sup> Calvin, Institute, pp. 965, 967-68. Also see Thrall, Hibbard, and Holman's Handbook to Literature, pp. 68-69.

<sup>79</sup> Schaff, I, 517. The Fourth Point of Calvinism as presented at the Synod of Dort.

the doctrine of irresistible grace from God to all men but only to the elect.

The Remonstrants, demonstrating the belief of the Arminian followers, violently objected to the Calvinistic doctrine of irresistible grace. Their fourth article dealt with "resistible" grace.

Resistible Grace. - Grace is the beginning, continuation, and end of our spiritual life, so that man can neither think nor do any good or resist sin without preventing, co-operating, and assisting grace. But as for the manner of co-operation, this grace is not irresistible, for many resist the Holy Ghost (Acts vii).<sup>80</sup>

It has already been established that the Arminians held God's grace as completely necessary in the overall plan for man's salvation. In order for man to resist evil and do good works, he must have God's grace, which indeed he does.<sup>81</sup> The main point of disagreement between Arminius and Calvin lies in the doctrine of the irresistibility of God's grace. The Arminians felt that although the grace of God was indispensable, the same grace, made available to all sinners who would believe in Christ, was definitely resistible. That is, man of his own free will could resist God's grace.<sup>82</sup> Even in their second article, concerning Universal Atonement, the Remonstrants revealed their belief that

The grace of God may be resisted, and only those who accept it by faith are actually saved.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>80</sup>Schaff, I, 518. The Fourth Point of Arminianism presented to the Synod of Dort.

<sup>81</sup>Refer to section III, Chapter II in this paper, p. 37.

<sup>82</sup>Refer to Chapter I, pp. 15, 17.

<sup>83</sup>Adolph Harnack, A History of Dogma (London: Williams and Norgate, 1899), v. 248; italics are mine.

Milton also felt that God's grace was necessary to man if he wanted saving faith or salvation. Man could not do without this grace, but he could resist it. As pointed out in Section II, God gave sufficient grace to man to enable him to attain salvation if he chose to do so. This does not imply, however, that all men have an equal measure of God's grace.

It is owing, therefore, to his supreme evil that God does not vouchsafe equal grace to all; but it is owing to his justice that there are none to whom he does not vouchsafe grace sufficient for their salvation. . . . But the offer of grace [to all] having once been proclaimed, those who perish will always have some excuse, and will perish unjustly, unless it be evident that it is actually sufficient for salvation.<sup>64</sup>

Milton, then, completely objects to the Calvinistic idea that sufficient grace for conversion, faith, and salvation is withheld from some men but is granted unconditionally to others. He felt that God's offer of grace was open to all men in sufficient, though not equal, quantities. Just as the Arminians had done, Milton rejected the doctrine of irresistible grace which was adopted by the Synod as the accepted orthodox belief. He held that

. . . God excludes no one from the pale of repentance and eternal salvation, till he [the man] has despised and rejected the propositions of sufficient grace [of his own free will], offered even to a late hour for the sake of manifesting the glory of his long-suffering and justice.<sup>65</sup>

No man must necessarily or absolutely be converted and saved; the decision rests with man.

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<sup>64</sup>Milton, C. E., XIV (1. h), pp. 147-49, and 151; italics are mine.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 153; italics are mine.

Thus, as exemplified in The Christian Doctrine, Milton not only accepts, but advocates a doctrine of resistible grace, which is certainly in agreement with Arminian theology. By taking such a stand on resistible grace, both theologians further emphasize man's freedom of will in his relationship to God. Milton and Arminius not only justify God's ways to men, but also justify mankind's worship of God--which is equally important.

If this use of the will [man's freedom to either worship God or reject him] be not admitted, whatever worship or love we render to God is entirely vain and of no value; the acceptableness of duties done under a law of necessity is diminished, or rather is annihilated altogether, inasmuch as freedom can no longer be attributed to that will over which some fixed decree is inevitably suspended.<sup>86</sup>

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Calvin believed that the predetermined elect would invariably persevere in their faith, no matter what the trial or temptation may be. He felt that Christ had guaranteed His people (the elect) that their certainty of salvation was irrevocable. No matter what came about, and regardless of what they did, these people would go to heaven, because Christ had protected them.<sup>87</sup> This is usually referred to as Calvin's doctrine of "the perseverance of the saints."

At the Synod of Dort, the fifth point offered by the Calvinists

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid., pp. 139-41.

<sup>87</sup>See Calvin's Institute, p. 971; see Chapter I, p. 10 in this thesis for Calvin's statement on the certainty of the perseverance of the elect.



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That those who have received this irresistible grace can never totally and finally lose it, but are guided and preserved by the same grace to the end.<sup>88</sup>

The Remonstrants held that no one had proved the certainty of perseverance, or that grace, once it had been given, could never be lost. Thus, at Dort, the Arminians rejected the Calvinistic doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. As presented to the Synod, their fifth article reads as follows:

The Uncertainty of Perseverance. - Although grace is sufficient and abundant to preserve the faithful through all trials and temptations for life everlasting, it has not yet been proved from the Scriptures that grace, once given, can never be lost.<sup>89</sup>

On this point Arminius' followers went further and taught the possibility of a final or total fall of believers from grace. They pointed out such passages in the Scriptures where believers were warned against just that danger, and to such examples as Solomon and Judas. The Arminians assuredly denied, as did the Roman Catholics, that anybody could have a certainty of salvation except by special revelation.

These five points the Remonstrants declare to be in harmony with the word of God, edifying and, as far as they go, sufficient for salvation. They protest against the charge of changing the Christian Reformed religion, and claim toleration and legal protection for their doctrine.<sup>90</sup>

Just as God's grace could be rejected by man, as a free agent,

<sup>88</sup>The fifth point of Calvinism, Schaff, I, 517.

<sup>89</sup>The fifth article of the Remonstrants, Schaff, I, 519.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

it could also be accepted by man. This same man could believe at one time and disbelieve at another. Salvation, then, is not certain; that is, it is not absolutely decreed that any one person or group, regardless of merit, will of necessity aspire to heaven.

Arminius said that

[God] knew from all eternity those individuals who would . . . believe, and through his subsequent grace would persevere . . . he likewise knew those who would not believe and persevere.<sup>91</sup>

This simply says that God, through his divine wisdom, foresaw or foreknew those men who would believe and persevere in their faith, which are the conditional requirements for salvation. It does not mean that God foreordained or elected a certain group of men who, guided by Christ, would persevere and aspire to salvation just because God absolutely decreed it.

Milton, like the Arminians, felt that man, through God's grace, must have faith, and persevere (continue) in his faith to the end in order to attain salvation. In his conception of the perseverance of the saints, Milton agreed with the idea put forth by the Remonstrants at the Synod of Dort. Concerning Milton's idea of perseverance,

THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS IS THE GIFT OF GOD'S PRESERVING POWER, WHEREBY THEY WHO ARE FOREKNOWN, ELECT AND BORN AGAIN, AND SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, PERSEVERE TO THE END IN THE FAITH AND GRACE OF GOD, AND NEVER ENTIRELY FALL AWAY THROUGH ANY POWER OR MALICE OF THE DEVIL OR THE WORLD, SO LONG AS NOTHING IS WANTING ON THEIR OWN PARTS, AND THEY CONTINUE TO THE UTMOST IN THE MAINTENANCE OF FAITH AND LOVE.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Arminius, Declaration of Sentiments, p. 248.

<sup>92</sup>Milton, C. E., XVI, 75-77; capitals are Milton's.

Thus, man must maintain and continue in his faith and love for God. Only upon these conditions can man resist temptation through God's grace. Man must hold up his share of the load; if he fails to do so, then he may fall, even if he is a believer.

That a real believer, however, may fall irrecoverably, the same apostle [Paul] shows, chap. 11.16. . . . The text in Ezekiel, xviii.26 is clearer; "when a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness . . . he shall die." . . . Christ therefore prayed to the Father that the faith of Peter might not fail, Luke xxii.32. For it was possible for his faith to fail through his own fault, without any failure in the ordinary gifts of God's grace. . . . Accordingly, not the elect, but those who continue to the end [persevere], are said to obtain salvation.<sup>93</sup>

Milton readily admits, as pointed out previously, that God's grace to man is offered in quantities sufficient to enable the faithful believer to persevere. But he also maintains that there is no certainty that grace will be kept forever and never lost. Man most certainly can sin, any man, not just the reprobate. Man can also reject God's grace. Thus, there is no reason to believe that grace, offered to all by God, cannot be lost even after being accepted. It is improbable but not impossible.

For "not to be able," as the Remonstrant divines have rightly observed, does not always signify absolute impossibility, either in common language or in Scripture. Thus we often say that a particular thing cannot be done, meaning that it cannot be done with convenience, honor . . . or good faith. . . . In like manner, when it is said in the present passage "he cannot sin," the meaning is, that he cannot easily fall into sin, and therefore cannot easily depart from the faith [but it is possible].<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., pp. 83, 85-87; italics are mine.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., pp. 93-95.

Thus, Milton's conception of the perseverance of the saints is conditional; if man adheres to the conditional requirements, he may aspire to salvation or eternal life. Because of this, it may be concluded that Milton accepts the Remonstrants' idea of the uncertainty of perseverance and rejects the fifth point set forth by the Calvinists.

It has been the purpose of this chapter to compare the beliefs held by Arminius and the Remonstrants, as presented in five Arminian articles (issued at the Synod of Dort), with the basic theology of John Milton, as written in The Christian Doctrine, especially concerning the doctrines of predestination and free will. By contrasting the beliefs of Arminius and Milton with those of the more orthodox five points of Calvinism, the similarities between Miltonic and Arminian theology become more apparent.

In summary, then, the five cardinal points of Calvinism, accepted by the Synod of Dort, but rejected by the Remonstrants, advocated the following theological doctrine:

1. Mankind is totally depraved in mind and nature. Even before creation God foreordained man's final election to salvation and reprobation to damnation, regardless of merit. Total depravity is inherent in man.
2. God offered unlimited or free grace to the elect which was necessary for their salvation. He left the reprobate, however, condemned and without hope of salvation.
3. Christ died only for the elect; thus, the atonement was limited to the elect and excluded completely the reprobate.

4. God grants irresistible grace to the elect; the elect must, of necessity, be saved. They cannot resist God's grace. The reprobate, on the other hand, cannot accept God's grace.

5. The elect can never completely lose God's grace. The Calvinist believed in the absolute "perseverance of the saints." The saints could not lose faith.

Milton and Arminius agree on the following articles (theological points) as issued by the Remonstrants at the Synod of Dort in rejection of the Calvinistic points:

1. Predestination was conditional, not absolute; God will save man if he believes in Jesus and perseveres in his faith to the end. The unfaithful or unbelievers will be condemned. Election and reprobation then are made conditional on the faith of man. God foresaw those who would be saved, but he did not necessitate or foreordain their fall. Man was depraved and sinful in nature, but he could be saved through faith. Man's will was free, he could choose for himself. Man cannot blame the depravity of his own nature for his fall.

2. Christ died to atone for the sins of all men, not just the elect. The atonement, then, was universal, not limited. Christ's sacrifice is sufficient for the redemption of the entire world, but its efficacy depends on man himself--his final belief or disbelief. The offer of grace by God to man was universal and unlimited to all men, not just to the elect. However, this grace could be resisted.

3. In order for man to do good and righteous works and thereby aspire to eternal life (salvation), he must be regenerated by God

through Christ. Without a renewal or regeneration by God, man cannot reach for or have saving faith. Christ, however, has made satisfaction for all sinners by His sacrifice.

4. God's grace is indispensable in the overall scheme of salvation; His grace has been offered in sufficient quantities to all men. However, God's grace is not irresistible. Man, of his own free will, can choose whether or not he will accept or reject this grace.

5. The grace of God can be resisted; it is also possible that grace can be lost, even after being accepted. The perseverance of the saints and of man in general depends on that individual continuing in his belief and faith in God to the end. It is possible for a real believer to fall. Even a saint's faith could fail.



own choices. God did not foreordain the fall of man, although He did foresee this fall, and He did not absolutely or unconditionally designate one group of men as elect and the other as reprobate. Man's freedom was his to use.

. . . So will fall,  
 Hee and his faithless Progenie: whose fault?  
 Whose but his own? ingrate, he had of mee  
 All he could have; I made him just and right,  
 Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall. . . .  
 Freely they [the Ethereal Powers] stood who stood,  
 and fell who fell.  
 Not free, what proof could they have given sincere  
 Of true allegiance, constant Faith or Love . . .  
 When Will and Reason (Reason also is choice)  
 Useless and vain, of freedom both despoiled,  
 Made passive both, had serv'd necessitie,  
 Not mee. They therefore as to right belong'd,  
 So were created, nor can justly accuse  
 Thir maker, or thir making, or thir Fate,  
 As if predestination over-rul'd -  
 Thir will, dispos'd by absolute Decree  
 Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed  
Thir own revolt, not I. . . .  
 So without least impulse or shadow of Fate,  
 Or ought by me immutable foreseen,  
 They trespass, Authors to themselves in all  
 Both what they judge and what they choose; for so  
I form'd them free, and free they must remain,  
 Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change  
 Thir nature, and revoke the high Decree  
 Unchangeable, Eternal, which ordain'd  
 Thir freedom, they themselves ordain'd thir fall. <sup>97</sup>

Thus, the only unchangeable or necessitative decree of God was the high Decree ordaining man's freedom. Man was responsible for his fall, not God.

Man must be obedient to God's commands, however, if he is to be

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid., III, ll. 95-128, pp. 80-82; italics are mine.



saved. In the Old Testament the condition is obedience; it is faith in the New Testament.

. . . and in a moment [God] will create  
Another world, out of one man a Race  
Of men innumerable, there to dwell,  
Not here [heaven], till by degrees of merit rais'd  
They open to themselves at length the way  
Up hither, under long obedience tri'd,  
And Earth be chang'd to Heav'n . . .<sup>98</sup>

God tells man to

Be strong, live happy, and love, but first of all  
Him whom to love is to obey, and keep  
His great command; take heed least  
Passion sway  
Thy Judgement to do aught, which else free Will  
Would not admit . . .<sup>99</sup>

Milton did not hold the same belief about an elect and a regenerate as the Calvinists. To him, this meant accepting the idea of a totally unmerciful God who would condemn, without hesitation, certain men regardless of what they had done.

Some I have chosen of peculiar grace  
Elect above the rest; so is my will:  
The rest shall hear me call, and oft be warn'd  
This sinful state, and to appease betimes  
Th' incens'd Deitie, while offered grace  
Invites; for I will clear thir senses dark,  
What may suffice, and soft'n stonie hearts  
To pray, repent, and bring obedience due . . .  
To prayer, repentance, and obedience due,  
. . . with sincere intent,  
Mine ear shall not be slow, mine eye not shut.  
And I will place within them as a guide  
My Empire Conscience, whom if they will hear.

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., VII, ll. 155-60, p. 217.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., VIII, ll. 633-37, p. 258; italics are mine.

light after light well us'd they shall attain,  
And to the end persisting, safe arrive.<sup>100</sup>

Thus, Milton believes that there is hope for all men; this hope, however, is on a conditional basis. If he wills to do so, man can pray, repent, and obey God. God calls all men and warns them of their sinful nature and their need for Him. He will hear man if man will but ask forgiveness and repent--all men, not just a few.

Milton, in agreement with the Remonstrants, felt that God offered His grace to all people; that is, God's grace is unlimited, not limited just to the elect.<sup>101</sup> This grace was meant for all people and was offered in sufficient measure for every man, if he would believe, to be saved. God's eternal purpose decreed that

Man shall not quite be lost, but sav'd who will,  
Yet not of will in him, but grace in me  
Freely voutsaft; once more i will renew  
His lapsed powers, though forfeit and enthrall'd  
By sin to foul exorbitant desires;  
Upheld by me, yet once more he shall stand  
On even ground against his mortal foe,  
By me God upheld, that he may know how frail  
His fall'n condition is, and to me ow  
All his deliv'rance, and to none but me.<sup>102</sup>

Man won't be quite lost, says Milton, but God will uphold and regenerate him. In their doctrine of saving grace, the Arminians held that in order for man to do good works or be saved, he must be regenerated

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, III, ll. 183-97, p. 84; italics are mine.

<sup>101</sup> Refer to p. 30, Section II, Chapter II of this thesis and note the Arminian stand on unlimited grace and universal atonement. This statement also points out Milton's acceptance of the Arminian belief in the necessity of God's grace.

<sup>102</sup> Milton, *Paradise Lost*, C. E., III, ll. 173-82, pp. 83-84; italics are mine.

or renewed by God. Man's deliverance he owed to God and none other; God upholds man so that he might resist evil if he chooses to do so.<sup>103</sup>

God offers grace--infinite grace--to mankind. Jesus while talking to God said

Father, thy word is past, man shall find grace;  
And shall grace not find means, that finds her way,  
The speediest of thy winged messengers,  
To visit all thy creatures, and to all  
Comes unprevanted, unimplor'd unsought . . .<sup>104</sup>

God made thee of choice his own, and of his own  
To serve him, thy reward was of his grace,<sup>105</sup>  
Thy punishment then justly is at his will.

Through God's grace mankind, any man or woman, could repent and try to live a good life. In the theological opinions of Milton and the Remonstrants, hope was offered; man was not fatally and unmercifully doomed without being given a chance by God.

Jesus presented the prayers for forgiveness to God in behalf of Adam and Eve who wanted to repent.

Thus they in lowliest plight repentant stood  
Praying, for from the Mercie-seat above  
Prevenient Grace descending had remov'd  
The stonie from their hearts, and made new flesh  
Regenerate grow instead. . . . [Jesus then comments]  
See Father, what first fruits on Earth are sprung  
From thy implanted Grace in Man, these Sighs  
And Prayers . . . I thy Priest before thee bring. . . .<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>Refer to p. 36 for the Arminian article on saving faith, regeneration and renewal.

<sup>104</sup>Milton, Paradise Lost, III, ll. 226-31, p. 85; italics are mine.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., X, ll. 766-69, p. 332; italics are mine.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., IX, ll. 1-5, 22-25, pp. 345-46; italics are mine.

Just as they believed in conditional predestination and unlimited grace, both Milton and the Remonstrants held that Christ died to atone for the sins of all men and every man; Christ's sacrifice was not limited to the benefit of Calvin's elect. The atonement was universal.

Adam and Eve ate of the fruit and by so doing directly disobeyed God's sole command, a violation of the condition of obedience. God speaks of man:

To expiate his Treason hath naught left  
 But to destruction sacred and devote,  
 He [Adam] with his whole posteritie [mankind] must dye,  
 Dye hee or Justice must; unless for him  
Som other able, and as willing, pay  
The rigid satisfaction, death for death. . . .  
Which of ye [angelic host] will be mortal to redeem  
Mans mortal crime, and just th' unjust to save . . . 107

God wants a volunteer who is willing to sacrifice himself for man's sins and thereby expiate him from his treason. God's son, Jesus Christ, willingly consented to pay for man's sins by his death.

Behold mee then, mee for him, life for life  
 I offer, on mee let thine anger fall;  
 Account mee man; I for his sake will leave  
Thy bosom, and this glorie next to thee  
Freely put off, and for him lastly dye . . . 108

Adam's crime has made all men of future generations guilty but through Christ they can be restored or renewed.

The Head of all mankind, though Adams Son.  
 As in him perish all men, so in thee  
As from a second root shall be restor'd,  
As many as are restor'd, without thee none.

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<sup>107</sup>Ibid., III, ll. 207-15, pp. 84-85; italics are mine.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., III, ll. 236-40, p. 86; italics are mine.

His Adam's crime makes guiltie all his Sons, thy merit  
Imputed shall absolve them who renounce  
Their own both righteous and unrighteous deeds,  
And live in thee transplanted, and from thee  
Receive new life. . . .  
 Giving to death, and dying to redeem,  
 So dearly to redeem what Hellish hate  
 So easily destroy'd . . . 109

God and all the Heavenly Host were touched by Christ's offer. God said  
 to Jesus

. . . well thou know'st how dear,  
 To me are all my works, nor Man the least  
 Though last created, that for him I spare  
Thee from my bosom and right hand, to save,  
By losing thee a while, the whole Race lost.  
 Thou therefore whom thou only canst redeem . . . 110

Out of God's mercy, Jesus came to die for man who had sinned.

Man, in Adam, had been disobedient and unfaithful, but he later became  
 repentant. Christ, who intervened in man's behalf, had to endure man's  
 punishment.

So onely can high Justice rest appaid.  
 The Law of God exact he Christ shall fulfill  
 Both by obedience and by love, though love  
 Alone fulfill the Law; thy punishment  
He shall endure by coming in the Flesh . . .  
Proclaiming Life to all who shall believe  
In his redemption, and that his obedience  
 Imputed becomes theirs by Faith, his merits  
 To save them, not thir own, though legal works.  
 . . . so he dies,

But soon revives; . . .  
Thy ransom paid, which Man from death redeems . . .  
 Neglect not, and the benefit imbrace  
 By Faith not void of workes; this God-like act  
Annuls thy doom, the death thou should's't have dy'd,  
 In sin for ever lost from life . . . 111

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109 Ibid., III, ll. 286-301, pp. 87-88; italics are mine.

110 Ibid., III, ll. 276-81, p. 87; italics are mine.

111 Ibid., XII, ll. 401-29, pp. 393-94; italics are mine.

It is obvious that in Paradise Lost Milton stuck to his Arminian belief that Christ died for the sake of all men. The atonement was universal, not limited. However, it was man's duty to accept Christ and believe in his redemption by showing good works and having faith. God gave mankind (everybody) a second chance to meet and honor the set conditions of faith, belief, and obedience.

God's grace, then, was extended to all men everywhere. Its sufficiency was guaranteed by God, but its efficiency was dependent on man's choice to accept it or not. Grace, however, even though it is unlimited and offered to all, can be resisted. Thus, Milton did not accept the Calvinistic doctrine of irresistible grace (to the elect).<sup>112</sup>

So dearly to redeem what Hellish hate  
So easily destroy'd, and still destroyes  
In those who, when they may, accept not grace.<sup>113</sup>

From the above passage, it can be concluded that Milton agrees with the Remonstrants on their fourth article which deals with irresistible grace.

Just as God left to man the decision of whether or not to accept grace, He also left him the right to persevere. Section V, Chapter II, pointed out Milton's Arminian belief that man, through God's grace, was able to persevere, but he must choose to do so. It was not absolutely impossible for the faith of a saint to fall. Man, though granted this

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<sup>112</sup>See pp. 40-41 in Chapter II for the Arminian article on resistible grace.

<sup>113</sup>Milton, Paradise Lost, III, ll. 300-03, p. 88; italics are mine.

grace, could lose this gift.<sup>114</sup>

This my long sufferance and my day of grace  
They who neglect and scorn, shall never taste;  
But hard be hard'nd, blind be blinded more.<sup>115</sup>

[Raphael says to Adam]  
That is, to thy obedience; therein stand. . . .  
God made the perfect, not imitable;  
And good he made thee, but to persevere  
He left it in thy power, ordained thy will  
by nature free, not over-rul'd by Fate  
Inextricable, or strict necessity . . .<sup>116</sup>

I [God] in thy persevering shall rejoyce,  
And all the Blest: stand fast; to stand or fall  
Free in thine own arbitrement it lies.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>Refer to pp. 43-45 above, Chapter II, for Arminian statement of uncertainty of perseverance.

<sup>115</sup>Milton, Paradise Lost, III, ll. 198-200, p. 84.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., V, ll. 522-28, p. 162; italics are mine.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., VIII, ll. 639-41, p. 258; italics are mine.

APPENDIX



For convenience a chart showing the exact line references in Paradise Lost and Christian Doctrine is appended here. This chart specifies passages in Paradise Lost and Christian Doctrine relating to the Arminian doctrine set forth in the five articles presented by the Remonstrants at the Synod of Dort.

Arminianism

1. Conditional predestination enables man, if by God's grace he will believe and have faith, to be saved.  
See "The Remonstrance," p. 517, Creeds of Christendom; also Arminius, Declaration of Sentiments, p. 211.

2. God's grace was unlimited to all people; He offered this grace to every man. The atonement was

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and Christian Doctrine

1. On depravity, P. L. (C. E.) X, ll. 823-33, pp. 333-34.  
Conditional predestination, III, ll. 95-128, pp. 80-82; VIII, ll. 633-37, p. 258. On election and reprobation, III, ll. 183-97, p. 84.  
C. D. Milton rejected the doctrine of total depravity. See C. E., XV, 195-97; XVI, 103; XIV, 131. Predestination was conditional; man's will was free. See C. E., XIV, 71, 73, 75, and 77; C. E., XIV, 107-09; C. E., XIV, 91.  
2. On unlimited grace, P. L., III, ll. 173-82; pp. 83-84; III, ll. 226-31, p. 85; X, ll.

Arminianism

universal; Christ died for all men.

See Arminius, Dec. of Sentiments, pp. 248-49. Also see "Remonstrance," p. 518.

3. The Remonstrants rejected the doctrine of limited atonement. In their third article they dealt with saving faith. Man had to be regenerated by God if he (man) was going to do good works and be saved. See Schaff, I, 518; also Arminius, Dec. of Sentiments, pp. 246-50.

4. The Arminians rejected the idea of irresistible grace; they believed

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and Christian Doctrine

766-69, p. 332.

C. D. God's grace and mercy were unlimited and universal; it was for all people, not just the elect. C. E., XIV, 138-39; XIV, 147. Christ died for all men, the universal atonement. C. E., XV, 291, 349.

3. On saving faith and regeneration, P. L. XI, ll. 1-25, pp. 345-46; III, ll. 276-301, pp. 87-88. On universal or unlimited atonement, III, ll. 207-40, pp. 84-86; XII, ll. 401-29, pp. 393-94.

C. D. Milton rejected the idea of a limited atonement. He, too, felt that man must be regenerated by God in Christ if he wanted to be saved. C. E., XV, 393, 327-39.

4. On resistible or irresistible grace, P. L. III, ll.

Arminianism

that God's grace, though necessary, was resistible. See the "Reason-  
strance," Schaff, I, 518.

5. It is possible that grace once given can be lost; or no absolute certainty that everyone will persevere, even the saints. See Arminius, p. 248; also Schaff, I, 519.

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and Christian Doctrine

300-03, p. 88.

C. D. Milton felt that God's grace was necessary for man if he was to attain to salvation.

But grace can be resisted, because man's will is free.

C. E., XIV, 147-49, 151-53.

5. On perseverance of the saints, P. L. III, ll. 198-200, p. 84; V, ll. 522-28, p. 162; VIII, ll. 639-41, p. 258.

C. D. Milton believed that a righteous man could turn bad or a believer could fall. He rejected the Calvinistic point. C. E., XVI, 75-77; XVI, 73-87, 93-95.

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