

Arminius, Arminianism, and the Five Articles of the Remonstrants

Who was Arminius?

[James Arminius was] a distinguished divine in Holland. . . . He was born in 1560, at Oudewater, a small town in Holland, and was sent to school at Utrecht, and subsequently at Marburg. At the age of fifteen he entered as a student at the University of Leyden, and after six years was supported by the Conference of Amsterdam, on his agreement that he would not serve any other church without the permission of the burgomaster of that city. In the following year he entered the Theological School of Geneva, where, in his occasional lectures, he manifested great independence of thought. He then visited Basle, but returned to Geneva and spent three years more in theological studies; after which he visited various schools in Italy, and proceeded to Rome. . . . Recalled to Amsterdam by the burgomaster of the city, he was ordained as a minister in 1588. A work having been published shortly afterwards attacking the Calvinistic view of predestination, Arminius was requested to answer it; but on careful examination he became convinced that the doctrine taught by Calvin and Beza could not be supported by the Holy Scriptures. He took occasion soon after to express his views in his lectures on the ninth chapter of Romans. In 1603 he accepted a professorship in the Leyden University, where he received the degree of D.D., being the first to receive from the university that high honor. His lectures attracted great attention, but his doctrines were severely assailed by members of the theological faculty. He was denounced as a Pelagian and worse than a Pelagian, and in 1607 an assembly was convened at the Hague to decide in what manner a synod was to be held to determine the controversy. In 1608, Arminius, and Gomar, his chief opponent, appeared before the Supreme Court of the Hague, which, having heard their statements, decided that the points on which they differed were of little importance and unessential to religion. He had been for some time in feeble health, and died October 19, 1609. He was a man of acute and powerful mental faculties, and was distinguished above his contemporaries for his style and eloquence, and while amiable and gentle in manner he especially excelled in theological power. Neander styles him "the model of a conscientious and investigating theologian." Though accused of Pelagianism and Arianism, his writings show that he had no tendency in those directions. He was broad and liberal in his views of church union, and earnestly longed for the time when Christians of all denominations should form one great unity in brotherly love. [Quoted from **Methodist Character Sketches**, a selection of articles from **The Cyclopaedia of Methodism, Fifth Revised Edition**, published in 1882, Edited by Matthew Simpson.] The Five Articles of the Remonstrants, 1610 The Articles of the Remonstrants given below, though published by his followers a year after his death, expresses the views of Arminius and his followers:

1. That God, by an eternal and unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ his Son, before the foundations of the world were laid, determined to save, out of the human race

- which had fallen into sin, in Christ, for Christ's sake and through Christ, those who through the grace of the Holy Spirit shall believe on the same his Son and shall through the same grace persevere in this same faith and obedience of faith even to the end; and on the other hand to leave under sin and wrath the contumacious and unbelieving and to condemn them as aliens from Christ, according to the word of the Gospel in [John 3:36](#), and other passages of Scripture.
2. That, accordingly, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he has obtained for all, by his death on the cross, reconciliation and remission of sins; yet so that no one is partaker of this remission except the believers [[John 3:16](#); [1 John 2:2](#)].
 3. That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the working of his own free-will, inasmuch as in his state of apostasy and sin he can for himself and by himself think nothing that is good--nothing, that is, truly good, such as saving faith is, above all else. But that it is necessary that by God, in Christ and through his Holy Spirit he be born again and renewed in understanding, affections and will and in all his faculties, that he may be able to understand, think, will, and perform what is truly good, according to the Word of God [[John 15:5](#)].
 4. That this grace of God is the beginning, the progress and the end of all good; so that even the regenerate man can neither think, will nor effect any good, nor withstand any temptation to evil, without grace precedent (or prevenient), awakening, following and co-operating. So that all good deeds and all movements towards good that can be conceived in through must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ. But with respect to the mode of operation, grace is not irresistible; for it is written of many that they resisted the Holy Spirit [[Acts 7](#) and elsewhere **passim**].
 5. That those who are grafted into Christ by a true faith, and have thereby been made partakers of his life-giving Spirit, are abundantly endowed with power to strive against Satan, sin, the world and their own flesh, and to win the victory; always, be it understood, with the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit, with Jesus Christ assisting them in all temptations, through his Spirit; stretching out his hand to them and (providing only that they are themselves prepared for the fight, that they entreat his aid and do not fail to help themselves) propping and upbuilding them so that by no guile or violence of Satan can they be led astray or plucked from Christ's hands [[John 10:28](#)]. But for the question whether they are not able through sloth or negligence to forsake the beginning of their life in Christ, to embrace again this present world, to depart from the holy doctrine once delivered to them, to lose their good conscience and to neglect grace--this must be the subject of more exact inquiry in the Holy Scriptures, before we can teach it with full confidence of our mind.

These Articles thus set out and delivered the Remonstrants deem agreeable to the word of God, suitable for edification and, on this subject, sufficient for salvation. So that it is not needful, and tends no to edification, to rise higher or to descend lower. [From Schaff's **Creeds of Christendom**, III; quoted in Henry Bettenson's **Documents of the Christian Church**, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), pages 268-269.] Additional

Sources If the above historical document leaves you confused concerning Arminianism, I highly recommend the following sites:

- [*The Works of James Arminius*](#). Read the Dutch theologian for yourself, rather than accepting what others say about him.
- ["TULIP" Calvinism Compared to Wesleyan Perspectives](#)," by Dennis Bratcher. A brief but good comparison of the differences between the two.
- [Calvinism and Arminianism](#) - Xenos Christian Fellowship Christian Principles. An excellent overview of the issues dividing Calvinists and Arminians from an Arminian perspective. Written with simplicity and clarity, and with respect for those on the other side of this centuries-old debate.
- ["From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology](#)," by Clark H. Pinnock. Though classic Arminianism and Wesleyan-Arminianism would differ with Pinnock on several crucial points, nevertheless this article is very helpful in its critique of Calvinism from an Arminian perspective, and its articulation of Arminian concerns.
- ["What Is an Arminian?" by John Wesley](#). Here Wesley outlines the differences between himself and George Whitefield.
- [Calvinism and Arminianism](#) -- Revival Theology Resources. A number of good resources, mainly from the standpoint of moral government or revival theology. See also their biography page for some excellent summaries of the lives of [Jacobus \(James\) Arminius](#) and [Hugo Grotius](#), as well as figures related to Revival Theology.
- ["God's Foreknowledge, Predestination, and Human Freedom"](#), by Dennis Bratcher. A different and more modern perspective to many of the same issues as the article above, coming to quite different conclusions.
- [Romans 9 \(an excerpt from Adam Clarke's Commentary\)](#). The renowned Methodist Biblical scholar tackles a key passage in the Calvinist/Arminian debate -- and handles it well!
- ["The Triumph of Arminianism -- and Its Dangers](#)," by Keith Drury. An interesting article discussing the modern shift toward Arminianism, noting the dangers of that shift, and recommending a moderate, Wesleyan-Arminianism.
- ["Fundamentalism and the Church of the Nazarene](#)," by Ed Crawford. Though the primary point of comparison is with Fundamentalism, not Calvinism, there is still much material here that addresses this subject also and addresses it well.
- [the robert brow model theology web](#). Robert Brow, author of a number of books and co-author with Clark Pinnock of **Unbounded Love** (InterVarsity Press, 1994), keeps here a number of books, articles, and Bible commentaries. Many of these are related to Creative Love Theism -- a position that holds a number of points in common with Arminianism, even Wesleyan-Arminianism. I highly recommend this sight.