

1: Confronting Five-Point Calvinism | Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture

A Brief Background To The "Conundrum" Through the centuries, the battle between the two great protestant theologies of Calvinism and Arminianism has raged on. At first, the Calvinists attempted to force their hand through an early persecution of Arminian believers.

Confronting Calvinism Why This Blog? This Blog is dedicated to the true gospel of the Bible which is Jesus, crucified and risen from the dead to give men his life. This true gospel is the standard by which Calvinism is confronted. It then lays out its actual occurrence through Jesus and then scripture boasts about it. No one can deny that redemption is a great theme in scripture. This sub-theme is backed by dozens of scriptures and is not based on just a single arbitrary scriptural reference. However, Calvinism vehemently opposes the idea that God offers salvation to all men. In doing so they employ several erroneous exegetical techniques which lead to errors. There are dozens of scriptures that convey the message that God offers salvation to all and the scriptures uses words like "all", "whoever" and "everyone" to convey the message. Here are but a few: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. The terms "all people", "mankind" and "all people" a second time make it clear that our Savior came to die for all. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. He succeeded in drawing all to him when he was lifted up at the cross. But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. This is not ambiguous in any way. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. There are many more but even if there were no more, the perspicacity of the above passages are undeniable. It makes God loving, merciful, just and no respecter of persons. The problem however is that Calvinists are not happy about this message. In fact, they deny the clear message of dozens of scriptures in order to deny the conclusion that Jesus died for all. Calvinists deny that Christ died for all. They hold at least two opinions on this. Other Calvinists say that words referring to words like "all" are referring to all "kinds" and not really all. Either way, "ALL" and other words like it never really mean "all" like people actually use the word. That is tough to explain. It is even tougher to explain why they do it. How do they deny these clear passages? They do so by the exegetical errors I listed above so now it is time to investigate these errors in greater detail: They simply choose to ignore the passage if it does not fit their grid. It is like they use a kind of Bible "white-out" since they act like the passage is not there or that it does not mean exactly what it says. Most hardcore Calvinists go beyond Chosen Ignorance and use a combination of the other three methods I listed above. First and foremost, they use Circular Reasoning. Circular Reasoning is the erroneous exegetical technique of interpreting something based fully on a preconceived belief. Since "such and such" is true then that means that this other "such and such" must also be true. This technique is commonly used by evolutionists who use their Circular Reasoning to rely first on their premise that there is no God which leads them to concoct theories based not on facts but on their original premise. Calvinists use Circular Reasoning in spades. They use it to deny the clear meaning of the scriptural passages listed above. Their original premise is that God elected only a few people to be redeemed and saved therefore the scriptures mentioned above must only refer to the elect. In doing so they break the cardinal rule of exegesis which is to read the scripture based on what it really says in its context. The reason Calvinists do this is because if the above scriptures are true then Calvinism is not a valid collection of doctrines. If God really wants all men to be saved then "unconditional election" is purely fiction. This is clear cut Circular Reasoning. Calvinists mix another exegetical erroneous method with Circular Reasoning which helps them to convince themselves what they believe is true. They use what all the fathers of Calvinism used including Augustine and Calvin. They use philosophy to support their exegesis. Philosophy is any argument that is not in scripture. It often reads into scripture an element that is simply not there and it is simply based on human

opinion. Therefore Calvinists will make statements like the following: These statements are strictly philosophical arguments since they have no scriptural basis. This is philosophy on steroids. Finally, the above errors allow Calvinists to simply redefine the words used in the "all" scriptures that I mentioned above. The Calvinist redefinition is that "all" does not mean "all" men; "all" means the "elect" or it means "kinds". They teach that whenever you see "all" it means the elect. They carry this over for every other term that conveys the word "all" and that includes the other terms including "whoever" and "everyone". How they do it with the word "mankind" is beyond ridiculous! Under what circumstances would anyone understand "all" to mean not all but all kinds? A merchant advertises, "Giant Sale All merchandise half price. If headlines read, "All males between the ages of 20 and 45 are subject of military draft," who would imagine that it really means some blacks, some whites, some from Illinois, some from Utah, etc.? Or if the announcement were made to a group of tourists stopping at an oasis near the Dead Sea in Israel that "Whoever is thirsty should get a drink now," would anyone imagine this meant some women, some men, some elderly among the thirsty etc.? For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. Calvinists believe this as well as those who oppose Calvinism. However the second part of the scripture is equally clear in saying that in Christ all were made alive. This creates a problem for Calvinists because they heartily agree that all died in Adam but they will deny that all in Christ will be made alive. This passage if interpreted like the other scriptures then would mean that "all" here means the elect. It would say "For as in Adam the elect die but in Christ the elect will be made alive. In the same way this passage is also a big problem for Calvinists: Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners Does it mean also that the non-elect are not sinners? This Calvinism view causes as many problems for Calvinism as it helps them. They cannot have it both ways and these are the kind of conundrums that Calvinists have when they use faulty, even foolish exegesis to support erroneous doctrines. Calvinism has many problems and this reckless exegesis is just one of them but it is a big one since it is clear beyond any challenge that Jesus died for everyone and the gospel message is to be preached to all. All means all and that is all! Darrell Brantingham Check out my pithy tweets on Twitter confrontcalvin Posted by.

2: Triablogue: Against Calvinism: Reviewed

Within Calvinist circles there is a divide between hyper-Calvinists and other moderate forms. Iain H. Murray, whose work and life mission I really appreciate, has a book called "Spurgeon vs. Hyper-Calvinism" in which Murray revitalizes Spurgeon's moderate positions.

And Arminians love to remind Calvinists of this fact. While exploring the doctrines of sovereign grace, it usually takes, oh, about 3. The Arminian scrunches his face and rolls his eyes and usually dismisses the notion. But then again, how can he help the Arminian see his point? You might call it an Arminian conundrum. Now to be perfectly honest, the following argument is really only meant for those individuals who are Arminian by studied choice. Those who are unfamiliar with systematic theology, or young in the faith, should be gently shown what the Scriptures say. I usually just point to verses and let the verses speak for themselves. Just Imagine a Calvinist being shown 1 Timothy 2: He then responds as follows It is always the Calvinist speaking: Christians are especially precious in His sight. And since God would exhaustively know all the possible scenarios, as well as their outcomes, He would know exactly what to do, right? Why are you giving me a funny look? I mean really, surely the One who creates calamity Amos 3: Surely the One who directs the steps of men Proverbs Surely He could do it. Could God, who desires to see this Christian attain final salvation, remove the saint via death at some point before the apostasy occurs, thus sparing him eternal condemnation? Do you agree that God could do it? Interestingly, 1 Corinthians Because God has set a precedent. He can and has gone to great lengths to preserve His sheep. One might even say radical. Now this is instructive. Not one Christian would ever be lost, because for those Christians who might wander or stray, God could intervene and keep them from perishing, even if it means enacting death before the act of apostasy. Now if someone argues that 1 Corinthians They are admitting that God has a reason for not acting the same way with all Christians, when it comes to their final destiny. But wait a minute! If this is so, then you have just affirmed, in principle at least, the validity of the Calvinistic answer. And what is that answer? God has two wills or multiple desires. Indeed, He genuinely wants all men to be saved. Given the nature of these two desires and His eternal objectives, He determines to allow a number of non-Christians to persist in their unbelief and justly suffer condemnation. Or, Affirm that God has a reason or reasons for allowing some Christians to finally perish, even though He wishes none to perish and could do something about it. If you choose option two, then one of your favorite proof texts loses its sting. But more importantly, the second option shakes the Arminian foundation to the core, for it suddenly creates a tremendous amount of internal tension. All the angst that was once directed at the Calvinistic answer turns on the Arminian. That being said, mysterious elements certainly remain. Mystery notwithstanding, there is much we can glean from the Scriptures in this area. And so in conclusion, I would urge you, my dear Arminian, to consider a fine article by John Piper. You can read it here:

3: Calvinist Quotes on God Determining All Evil | A Theology in Tension

9 Foreword Roger olson's book Against Calvinism represents a contemporary pre- sentation and defense of evangelical Arminianism that not only merits but requires careful and sympathetic reading by non-Arminians as well.

If the LAST, some sins of all men, then have all men some sins to answer for, and so shall no man be saved; for if God entered into judgment with us, though it were with all mankind for one sin, no flesh should be justified in his sight: You will say, "Because of their unbelief; they will not believe. If not, why should they be punished for it? If it be, then Christ underwent the punishment due to it, or not. If so, then why must that hinder them more than their other sins for which he died from partaking of the fruit of his death? If he did not, then did he not die for all their sins. Let them choose which part they will. A Brief Background To The "Conundrum" Through the centuries, the battle between the two great protestant theologies of Calvinism and Arminianism has raged on. At first, the Calvinists attempted to force their hand through an early persecution of Arminian believers. This however, did not succeed in silencing truth. John Owen was without a doubt the most staunch and prolific writer of Calvinism during this period, or any other period of history. While people were educated into Calvinism, it did not have the effect that was desired. Instead of fanning the fires of revival, it brought a stiff, formal, stifling, and oppressive form of Calvinism to the British Isles. In , there was born a man in due time named John Wesley. His entrance into the fray of religious history was during a period in England in which great sin and poverty ruled the people. The separation between the classes was great. The rich were very prosperous, and the poor were destitute. At one point, every fifth house in England was a gin establishment. There appeared a morbid passiveness among the people concerning what they believed was the "predestined" lot for their lives. There existed a great apathy towards religion and the elitist Church of England. In this environment, Arminianism had found a foothold, but not any widespread acceptance. John Wesley saw the great need of the people and the stifling effect that Calvinism had upon them. He sought to have the people rise above the idea of passive acceptance of their deplorable condition, and to trust in God that He had a better plan for their lives. Thus, Arminianism was welcomed with great anticipation, resulting in great advancements for the Lord and for English society. This short little history is placed here to give the reader an idea of the times and situation in which John Owen had written. As far as theology goes, Calvinism was king. John Owen was the most respected theologian of his day. The authority of his writings were rarely challenged. This was partly so because of his great learning and the dominance of Calvinism. But I would say that it was probably more so because of the great verbosity of his argument. You see, it will usually take more words to answer an argument than it does to make the initial argument. This is why I believe that most of his writings have not seen a rebuttal in print. Not because he is so "unanswerable," but that the mass of verbiage that would be required to answer his accusations and presuppositions would amount to too great of a loss of time. Through the wonderful technology of the internet, we have the privilege to see where some people have done us a favor by isolating a singular argument from Owen for our approval, or disapproval. This argument is posted on Religious Forums, far and wide, as insurmountable proof that Arminianism cannot work. It is believed that this argument puts us into the corner, and that it cannot be answered. This I will prove to be nothing more than an assumption. A "Universalist" was considered a rebel, a non-conformist, a theological liberal, an inferior. It is the same attitude that we see today in aggressive Calvinistic circles. Calvinism takes its theology, and appends the title "The Doctrines of Grace" upon it, then declares that anyone who opposes a single point of their theology is opposing "Grace. The "Doctrines of Grace" are what the Scriptures say that they are, not what a narrow Calvinistic creed says that they are. Instead of Scripture, they choose to raise a false dilemma for their argument. They want others to work with their definition of terms. They want others to assume that by replacing or connecting the Five Points of Calvinism with the idea of "The Doctrines of Grace, " that Arminians are opposing "Grace" when they oppose any single point of Calvinistic doctrine. While they are somewhat effective in using this flawed logic in making their case, it will only get a pass from the most shallow of thinkers. God imposed his wrath due unto, and Christ underwent the pains of hell for, 1. Owen argues that God imposed His wrath upon the Son for our atonement. Christ underwent all the pains of Hell and

atoned for "someone. Not three out of three, or two out of three, but one singular choice. First, Owen says that the wrath of God was upon Christ in the atonement, resulting in the suffering of Christ in the pains of hell. What he hopes to establish is that this occurred at a singular point in history in which it is now a past event. The logic goes like this: If Jesus was punished for the sins of all men, then God must acquit all men, for it is covered in the atonement. If the atonement of Christ does not save all unconditionally, then Christ must have died only for some men, and not all. By this argument, he seeks to arrive at the doctrine of a Calvinistic Limited Atonement. The contention is that since "unbelief" is a sin, and that sin is atoned for, then the result would be the inevitable salvation of the one who was atoned for. Belief or non-belief has no bearing on salvation. Either Jesus paid for your sins on the cross, or He did not. If He died for your sins, this included unbelief. All are not saved, thus all are not atoned for. Only the predestined elect are recipients of the death of Christ. All others are reprobate, doomed to the torment of everlasting fire for their unbelief. The result would be that we are all still in our sins, we are still under judgment for those sins that were unatoned for. Owen discounts option number three as hopelessly flawed and void of any serious consideration. To see if this irresistible logic holds water, we must first see if the presuppositions are Biblical ones or not. The center of his whole argument hinges upon whether the atonement of Christ is Penal or not. If the Scriptures uphold that theory, we must follow its conclusions wherever they may lead. To understand what is going on with this argument, we must acknowledge a fundamental truth, which is, that there are many theories of the atonement. In fact, he makes no allusion to any such formulated theory. To put it quite bluntly, the Penal Theory is a recent invention which is bent to support the theology of Calvinism. So, to use that which is invented to support another theory is nothing more than circular reasoning. Using a theory that was invented to support another theory is not proof that either theory is true. Part of this Gospel would include the Penal Theory of the atonement. Calvinism must get you to assume that the statement, "Doctrines of Grace" means the 5 Points of Calvinism, and that to deny one point is to deny the grace of God and the Gospel. Included in that is to suggest that a denial of the Calvinistic view of the atonement is also somehow also a denial of the Gospel. Owen presents this theory in a matter of fact manner so you arrive at his conclusion. He does not let on that it is an invented theory, because Owen must get you to assume that the Penal Theory is an undeniable fact for all of his conclusions to be correct. Just as the Calvinist dogmatically assumes their interpretation of the "Doctrines of Grace" is correct, they assume that the theory they developed to support this system is also flawlessly correct. We should not be basing our decisions concerning eternal life upon theories and presuppositions, but upon Scripture. What does the Bible assert concerning the atonement of Christ? I am going to make several observations about the atonement of Christ that may seem shocking to those that read them. The atonement is a subject that we have all been educated into to some degree. First, Owen presents, "God imposed his wrath due unto, and Christ underwent the pains of hell for These are assumptions, developed to support the Calvinistic system. Developed to support a theory, and not drawn from Scriptures to find the truth. The Scriptures never use the term "wrath" concerning what happened upon the cross. The Scripture consistently uses the term "suffered," not "punished. In order to be punished, one must be guilty. It is never said that Jesus was guilty of our sin, or that He was punished for our sin. To "suffer" in our stead is an accurate and Biblical representation of what occurred upon the cross. A "guilty" man deserves the punishment that he gets. An innocent man can only suffer. You cannot punish the innocent, because they are not guilty. A judge can incarcerate an innocent man, and many will assume his guilt and call it punishment, but that is an inaccurate term. If he is innocent, then it is an injustice, he is not punished, but he suffers the penalty due to punishment. Jesus did suffer the pains of hell for us. He did so as a substitute for punishment. Because of this, there is no payment of sins, but a provision for sins. This coincides with the Scriptural truth that the atonement was for all, not just a select few.

4: Calvinism, Conclusions and Confusion | Kingdom Change

I call it the "Calvinist Conundrum." It is a simple logical argument that has a conclusion that most orthodox Christians reject. Now if the argument is valid, if the conclusion does indeed follow from the premises, then to reject the conclusion, you have to reject one or more of the premises unless you simply want to give up logical.

Introduction For many years, Calvinism was at the heart of my belief system. It was unquestionable that man could not believe the gospel. Man, I held, was totally unable even to cry out for mercy. The Fall had rendered him incapable of receiving its remedy. Even his best acts were filthy rags, detestable before God. What was needed was a work of Efficacious Grace - a miracle, in fact - that would remove the heart of stone and bestow saving faith. This I deemed "sound doctrine. They were somehow more worthy of respect. They had an inherently greater demand on my attention and belief. Clark Pinnock describes a similar attitude he developed in the course of his faith-journey: Theirs were the books that were sold in the Inter-Varsity bookroom I frequented. They were the ones I was told to listen to; sound theology was what they would teach me. As with many Calvinists, my spiritual autobiography had two distinct peaks: My spiritual pedigree contained some of the brightest lights the faith has ever known: I was in good company. Years later, however, I seriously re-examined my beloved "five points. To question this point of the system is to question all of it. The last four points of Calvinism rest squarely upon the first, Total Inability. Once that dogma is removed, the entire superstructure crashes under its own weight. For those unfamiliar with the five points, I will here briefly define them: Man has sunk so far through the Fall that he is no longer capable of believing the gospel. He can no more repent and believe than a dead man can rise up and walk. This is all the result of the sin of Adam, who communicated this absolute inability, this loss of free will, to all his posterity. God has, before the creation of the world, selected a portion of humanity to be saved. This election is irrespective of any foreseen merits or faith. It is only according to the good pleasure of His will. Jesus on Calvary bore the full punishment due his elect, ensuring their final salvation. He did not die for the non-elect, who are excluded and hopelessly reprobated. God moves upon the helpless sinner before he has a single thought of responding to the good news. Grace renews the spiritually dead will, imparts a new nature and infallibly draws the sinner to Christ. Regeneration, or the new birth, occurs before belief in Christ. Faith, in fact, is a gift imparted to the sinner, who is entirely passive in this act. No one who truly begins the life of faith will ever fall away and perish. This, I believe, is an accurate portrayal of the system, free of caricature. Throughout this paper, many quotes from Calvinist authors should bear this out. Total Inability As stated earlier, the other points rise and fall with Total Inability. They are its logical corollary. In fact, one of the attractive aspects of Calvinism is its remarkable consistency. Each point buttresses the others. That makes it fairly easy to defend. This is especially true if one grants the very first point of Total Inability. For that reason, I will spend much more time analyzing this point than the other four. It has left him incapable of doing anything good, or even desiring it. Hence, he is disabled and can neither will nor obey any spiritual command - even the invitation to receive Christ. John Calvin sums this up in stark language: Every man, therefore, is born unable to respond to God. Calvinist theologian Augustus Strong notes: The Calvinist, because of his doctrine of Total Inability, denies that man has a free will. All sin-born humanity, without exception, has a will wholly enslaved to always doing what is wrong and unspiritual. If this is true, we would surely expect to find some mention of it in the Genesis account. There are other curses listed. God pronounced the death sentence, which He defined as a return to the dust Gen. Such language obviously denotes a physical death, not a loss of spiritual ability or a death to God. God decreed the presence of "thorns and thistles" to make toil more difficult v. He told the woman that she must endure great pain in childbearing v. Both of these curses are trivial compared to what would be the most debilitating curse of all: Henceforth such is the change I make in your natures: The moment their souls shall go forth from my hand What an awful blot would such a curse be on the first pages of Scripture! His expulsion from the Garden with its Tree of Life removed him from the source of immortality and made death certain. This is also true of his posterity. But the transmission of Total Inability toward God is nowhere conveyed in the text. Two primary texts adduced to prove the doctrine of Original Sin Rom. Nowhere are we told that an

invincible tendency to resist God was imparted to the race through the offense of one. If there were a place we would expect to find the doctrine, it would be in one of those passages dealing with the relationship between Adam and his descendants. But there is not a trace of such teaching there. The Calvinist doctrine raises a more basic question for our consideration: Where do the Scriptures teach that man had a holy, pure nature that became corrupted and transmitted to his posterity? Calvinists, and most Christians, for that matter, assume that God made Adam morally perfect. The London Confession of Faith presupposes this when it says that God "created man after His own Image, filled with all meet perfection of nature, and free from all sin" Section IV. But where does the Bible convey this bit of information? It is reasonable to affirm that Adam and Eve were created with an original innocence. Their eyes were then opened to good and evil, prompting them to hide from their Creator Gen. But it is another thing altogether to say that they fell from a state of moral perfection to total depravity. Many of the 17th century Polish Brethren denied that God created Adam either immortal or morally perfect. A document drawn up by Faustus Socinus and others expresses this thought: This is to be denied; For why did Adam sin if it is as they say? God created nothing perfect. Barnabas was "a good man" Acts After all, how could God create beings who "drink evil like water" Job While there is no denying the universal sinfulness of man, it should be noted that most of these extreme statements are from prophets and inspired poets who are expressing either outrage or brokenness of spirit. This tendency, we believe, was in Adam as well as every man who followed him. There is no exegetical reason to suppose otherwise. The Racovian Catechism notes how the character of people - both good and bad - is sometimes expressed poetically in extreme speech denoting a "from the womb" condition: Every person has folly bound up in the heart from earliest days Prov. But was Adam any different? The burden of proof is on the Calvinists to show that he was. The Scriptures never say so, and it is not our responsibility to prove a negative a logical impossibility. This is a serious difficulty. He lost perfection through sin and assumed a nature totally corrupted and alienated from God, a nature imparted to all mankind as a curse. But the Scriptural evidence for these contentions is, at best, scant. For the most part, the doctrine is assumed unquestionably. Calvin received it in toto from his medieval legacy, as has each successive generation of theologians since. A doctrine that forms such a colossal foundation-stone for the system should have unequivocal proof in the Bible. If a theology is based on an unproven philosophic assumption how can the rest of the system be trustworthy? The Calvinist cannot expect us to believe him unless the consistent tenor of Scripture tells us: Total Inability and the Gospel The Total Inability passed to us makes it impossible for us to comply with the command to believe in Christ. The most obvious fault with this doctrine is that it makes the gospel an unreasonable demand.

5: Full text of "The Life of John Milton Volume 3 "

What we hear described in this instance is the "monergist conundrum." Notice the reader's statement that he "cannot accept this as merely a 'mystery'." This is the flipside of the synergist conundrum or mystery.

A Journal of Mormon Scripture 4 Review of Roger E. Foreword by Michael Horton, author of For Calvinism. Arminians traditionally qualify, question, or reject what is commonly known as Five-Point Calvinism which is often but not necessarily summed up by the acronym TULIP: Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, and Perseverance. Olson traces the versions of Calvinist dogmatic theology to which he objects back to the decisions made at the famous Synod of Dort, a gathering of Calvinist divines that took place in the city of Dort Dordrecht in Dutch in 1618-19. "Against Calvinism" contains strong objections to some versions of Calvinism, or to what is also known as Reformed theology, though not to all of what John Calvin taught. His protests against what is entailed in these versions of Calvinism should, I believe, be of interest to Latter-day Saints, whose faith is often criticized by zealots whose opinions are often heavily influenced by various brands of Calvinism. The primary differences between the two are the absence of intellectual fire-power among countercultists, and also the fact that Dutch Calvinists could and did make full use of the power of political regimes which they controlled to crush what they considered heresy. An example of their passion for persecution was their treatment of the famous jurist Hugo Grotius, an Arminian whom they sentenced to life in prison though, with the help of friends, he escaped in a book chest and fled to Paris. Later the Synod of Dort was anxious to quash the Arminian Remonstrants through the setting out of what were believed to be their heresies. The eventual result was, Olson claims, what is now known as Five-Point Calvinism see pp. Subsequently TULIP has become a kind of benchmark of presumably authentic Reformed theology for many scholars and preachers. Olson considers Calvinists of whatever brand to be Christians pp. Besides opposing high Calvinism p. Hence Olson does not object to all of Reformed theology. He argues, instead, that this venerable theological tradition, apart from what he considers its more objectionable elements, is in his estimation clearly Christ-centered p. Latter-day Saint readers should be aware that Olson does not allow that their faith is Christian despite the fact that it is profoundly Christ-centered. This seems odd to me and I have dealt with this seeming anomaly elsewhere. In addition, many of those in the unseemly countercult industry advance strident, rough versions of Reformed theology in which elements of TULIP are driven home with force. In addition, those who maintain that God predestined some to salvation—the predestined elect at the moment everything was created out of nothing—always [Page 88]turn out to picture themselves as elected, and all those who do not share their opinion were passed over when justification was determined. For this and related reasons the gentle Richard Mouw, who affirms TULIP, admits that he finds it harsh and those devoted to it highly contentious and quarrelsome rather than kind and loving see p. Since Calvinists of all stripes stress divine sovereignty, Calvinists also commonly insist on predestination and meticulous divine providence. Olson thus strives to save Calvin from at least some or, perhaps, from many Calvinists. The Calvinism against which Olson remonstrates tend to [Page 89]confess that God ordains, designs, controls, and renders certain the most egregious evil acts such as the kidnaping, rape, and murder of a small child and the genocidal slaughter of hundreds of thousands in Rwanda. He does not, however, wish to be seen as rejecting Reformed theology as such, or even all of what is commonly known as Calvinism. Whereas mysteries like the Trinity are for him acceptable, contradictions are not. Conundrums jar the mind, he says. He strives to demonstrate that Calvinism is replete with conundrums pp. If the radical divine determinism entailed in Five-Point Calvinism is taken seriously, God is dishonored on moral grounds, and His good name impugned. According to Olson this is done for no good reason. Despite the heavy hand of Augustine on the Reformation, neither logic nor the Bible requires it. I am in full agreement with Olson on these matters. Those in debt to Augustine, of course, celebrate what they call free will. They insist that the human will is free to do as one desires, but they also insist all desires are strictly given to human beings and hence are firmly determined by God. So from this perspective one is merely free to do what one was predestined to desire. This is clearly not what the Saints know as moral agency. The Augustinian legacy has thus, it seems, led Calvinists to picture

human beings as puppets in the hands of an all-powerful, inscrutable First Thing that created everything, including both space and time, out of nothing and that in a full sense caused everything, including even the moral evils, that humans encounter in this often troubling, fallen world. Insisting on divine sovereignty in such a very loud voice may end up actually demeaning the divine. This problem seems to me to stem from a fascination with what is now sometimes called classical theism, where what is attributed to God makes it impossible for him to be loving, gentle, and merciful. But most conservative Protestants, despite the abstract distant figure sketched by classical theism, when they face evils in this disconsolate world, end up pleading with a God who is not passive, but fully passionate and both can and will listen and respond to those who genuinely turn to him for mercy and consolation, as well as hope beyond the miseries of this world and of the grave. All of this, in addition to classical theism and the great ecumenical [Page 91]creeds, lurks behind or flows from the TULIP ideology against which Olson now remonstrates. I have urged the Saints to consult his books, which include the following, some of which I have previously reviewed favorably: Grenz 20th Century Theology: The Story of Christian Theology: Hall The Trinity Eerdmans, Though I have not published a review of this book, I have often recommended it to Latter-day Saints who are often faced with critics who seem to spout the Sabellian or modalist heresy, at least when they attack the faith of the Saints. The Mosaic of Christian Belief: And I am pleased to recommend to Latter-day Saints readers his impressive Against Calvinism, which is a useful book for all those interested in one of the contending versions of historical and contemporary Protestant dogmatic theology. Stewart, Ten Myths about Calvinism: IVP Academic, , See his Arminian Theology and related commentary below.

6: John Piper Implicates God in all Moral Evil – SOTERIOLOGY

In conclusion, I remain a Calvinist because it is the only system I know of that allows me to give full credit to God's revelation in the Bible without delving presumptuously into the matters He has not revealed.

I reiterate that the difference is not that Calvin believed in divine sovereignty, predestination, election, but Wesley did not. No, Wesley heartily affirmed all those great biblical doctrines, just not in the way Calvin understood them. Here is an argument I have developed to bring the heart of the difference into focus. Now if the argument is valid, if the conclusion does indeed follow from the premises, then to reject the conclusion, you have to reject one or more of the premises unless you simply want to give up logical consistency. Here is the argument. God truly loves all persons. Truly to love someone is to desire their well-being and to promote their true flourishing as much as you properly can. The well-being and true flourishing of all persons is to be found in a right relationship with God, a saving relationship in which we love and obey him. God could determine all persons freely to accept a right relationship with himself and be saved. Therefore, all will be saved. Now the large majority of Calvinists are not universalists, that is, they do not believe all will be saved. Indeed, many Calvinists believe God has elected only a small minority to salvation. Thus they reject the conclusion of the argument. But here is the question. Which of the previous four premises can be rejected if the conclusion is rejected? For Wesleyans, the answer is straightforward. They will reject premise 4, because they do not believe that we can be truly free if God determines all our choices, including the choice to accept Christ. But what is a Calvinist to do? If freedom and determinism are compatible, as Calvinists claim, then it seems that 4 is true. Furthermore, it is hard to see how any orthodox Christian could reject premise 3. So the Calvinist must reject either 2 or 1. Now some Calvinists clearly understand the logic of their position, and do not shrink from this implication. Classic Calvinist theologian Arthur W. Pink is a good example. Here is what he wrote: God does not love everybody. Consider another example from contemporary Calvinist spokesman John Piper. In a rather moving passage, Piper related the fact that he prayed for his children in the hope that they would join him in Christian faith and service. Piper then ended his essay with these words. And though I think I would give my life for their salvation, if they should be lost to me, I would not rail against the almighty. I am but a man. The potter has absolute rights over the clay. Mine is to bow before his unimpeachable character and believe that the Judge of all the earth has ever and always will do right. Much less does it anywhere speak of the sovereignty of God as singly disposing the eternal states of men. He is good, even to the evil and the unthankful; yea, without any exception or limitation, to all the children of men. The fundamental difference lies in how we understand the character and love of God. He does everything he can to save all persons, short of overriding their freedom. For the Calvinist, by contrast, love is a sovereign choice, which means he gives his grace to some but not to others. He sovereignly chooses to save some among the mass of fallen sinners, but leaves the rest in their fallen condition, thereby consigning them to eternal damnation. Given the fact that for the Calvinist, freedom and determinism are compatible, God could determine all persons freely to respond to his grace and be saved. But in his sovereign choice, he chooses not to do so. Indeed, some Calvinists even question premise 4 above, but for reasons that have nothing to do with freedom. They argue that God could save all persons insofar as freedom is concerned since on their view freedom and determinism are compatible. However, God must damn some people to show his wrath in order for his full glory to be displayed. Again, the difference between Wesleyan theology and Calvinist theology could hardly be more profound at this point. The idea that God might need to damn many people, even if they could be saved with their freedom intact as Calvinists understand freedom is utterly at odds with the biblical picture of God, who loved us while we were yet sinners, and gave his Son for our salvation. God does not need any to be damned for his glory fully to be displayed. Wesleyans and Calvinists radically disagree, then, about the character of God, and how his glory is displayed. This is the issue we need to keep squarely in focus as we discuss and debate the vital biblical doctrines of sovereignty, predestination and election. For more detail on all these issues explore Dr.

7: Society of Evangelical Arminians | Calvinism

Introduction. For many years, Calvinism was at the heart of my belief system. It was unquestionable that man could not believe the gospel. He had a latent and inborn aversion to all things spiritual, even the gracious gospel that the common people heard gladly in Jesus' day (Mark).

Dedicated to the devotional, exegetical and philosophical study of theological paradox in Conservative, Thoroughly Biblical, Historically Orthodox, Essentially Reformed theology. Divine self-limitation and human free will are better, more rational explanations. Does McKnight truly think the Bible leaves those options open? It is better to have philosophical conundrums on our hands and remain uncompromising with Scripture than to construct pretend "explanations" of the Word of God using mere man-made speculation. I responded as follows: First, It is obvious that God self-limits however, His self-limiting - or condescension, divine humility, etc. For a Calvinist, there is no problem in any of that. The major problem, in fact, is not that God self-limits, but that human beings self-exalt. We easily commit the error of filling in the gaps with our own thoughts. However, because the contradictions themselves are only apparent, the resolutions we create are also only apparent. They are a mirage designed to make us feel better - but in reality we have solved nothing. There was nothing to solve because God never saw any conflict between the two sides we supposedly resolved. His meticulous sovereignty and our freedom of choice. In fact, if we "solved" the apparent problem by contradicting a single Biblical proposition, we only succeeded in creating a bigger problem for ourselves! Second, it is true that "explanations" have been devised which fill in the logical gaps left by the Bible. However, I daresay this has only been done at the expense of the Bible. There is no way to take ALL of the Bible at full face value without accepting a great deal of mystery and some degree of paradox or antinomy. We stand in great danger of overstepping whenever we begin to demand answers to questions God Himself has left unanswered. I believe any true Pietist can and should find such an arrangement refreshingly humbling. Pietists and Calvinists ought to be the best of friends.

8: Jerry Walls ~ God's Love and Predestination - Seedbed

My conclusion was just that...a conclusion, and a conclusion that shows the implication of the stated belief. What you did was accuse me of making the stated belief the premise, and thus you just did exactly the issue that I have just shown is a Calvinist debate tactic.

All biblical doctrine is important. I would go so far as to say all biblical doctrine is essential. But the fact remains: The Reality of Damning Error Some people reject the very notion that disagreements about doctrine could preclude someone from salvation. We know that that kind of theological error exists because the Apostle Paul wrote Galatians 1: I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. Paul wrote that about the error of the Judaizers, which, if you think about it, by some evaluations was quite a fine point of doctrinal disagreement. Think about everything the Judaizers shared in common with the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints. They believed in one God, who exists eternally in three Persons: They believed in the deity and humanity of Christ. They believed that He was buried, and that He rose on the third day. And they believed that repentance and faith in Christ was absolutely necessary for forgiveness of sins and fellowship with God in heaven. That is a lot of really important doctrine that they got right! Their one issue boiled down, basically, to whether good works were the cause or the result of salvation. Was law-keeping the ground or merely the evidence of saving faith? Are we saved by faith alone, or by faith in Christ plus our religious observance? Now, that point of disagreement is an admittedly fine distinction! And yet Paul still employs the harshest language of condemnation for their error. Strong words for a disagreement on the *ordo salutis*! What it teaches us is, at the very least, there are certain things which, if believed, preclude someone from salvation, because to believe those things is to believe a different gospel, which is really no true gospel at all, and therefore which cannot save but can only condemn. What Are the Fundamental Doctrines? That brings us to the natural question: How much can one get wrong and still be a true child of God? Or said another way: What are those false doctrines which, if believed, by definition indicate that someone is not truly saved? The wrong beliefs that indicate someone is not saved are those teachings, which believed, necessarily undermine or deny the Gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone according to Scripture alone for the glory of God alone. But what are those wrong beliefs? I think we answer that question by asking a number of questions that span several categories of Christian doctrine. Does this teaching instruct us to trust in ourselves to contribute to our righteousness before God, even in part? Does this teaching encourage us to trust in anything else other than Christ alone for righteousness? Does this teaching teach us that salvation is something other than our redemption and deliverance from sin through the work of God in Christ? See this post for more on this. Perhaps the logical implications of it are—and if a synergist was truly consistent with himself it would lead to heresy. Theology Proper Because God Himself is the Author of salvation, we cannot be truly saved if we are trusting in anyone but the true God. Many people—even those who would call themselves Christians—profess faith in the God of the Bible. But some have transgressed so far that they have recast the true God into a god in their own image. There is something about their god that is fundamentally different from the true God. So we should ask: Does this teaching affirm something about God that is so false—so antithetical to His nature—that to believe it is to truly believe in a different God, and not the God of Scripture? This is an outright denial of the omniscience of God—the One who insists that He declares the end from the beginning, and brings to pass all the plans of His heart Isa So this is not a first-order issue. So we must ask: Does this teaching affirm something about the person or work of Christ that is so false, so antithetical to His nature that to believe it is to truly believe in a different Jesus? Arianism is such a teaching. Arians believe that Jesus is not of precisely the same substance or essence as the Father, but that He is of similar substance. Jesus is not truly divine, but neither is He merely human. He is god-like, but He is not God. And there cannot be a more fundamental difference between One who is God and one who is not. But the doctrine of incarnational sonship is an example of a Christological error that is nevertheless not heretical. But the distinction between ontological

versus functional subordinationism i. God sent His only Son John 3: Thus to believe incarnational sonship is not to believe in a different Christ. Pneumatology We cannot forget about the Third Member of the Trinity. Thus, to hold to error with respect to the Holy Spirit is to have a false view of God, and warrants the same concern as issues of Theology Proper and Christology. Therefore, when evaluating pneumatological error, we must ask yourselves: Does this teaching affirm something about the person or work of the Holy Spirit that is so false, so antithetical to His nature that to believe it is to truly believe in a different God? They must teach this if they insist upon denying the Trinity. But the Holy Spirit can be lied to Acts 5: A force can do none of these things; only persons can. It is to deny that the Spirit is God, and that God eternally exists in three coequal, coeternal, and consubstantial Persons. Thus, this is an error that crosses the line into heresy. It simply says the gifts that He once gave He is still giving today. But those who cross that line do so for reasons other than the bare concept of continuationism. But we also need to speak about doctrine that relates to the three-in-oneness of God. The God who is One in His essence and being eternally exists in Three co-equal, co-eternal, consubstantial Persons. To deny any aspect of this is to deny something so intrinsic to the very nature of God Himself that we would end up with a fundamentally different god. As mentioned above, this issue of personhood cuts to the very heart of what it means for God to be God. To say He is something other than One God eternally existent in Three Persons is to speak of an entirely different god. Thus, Modalism the contemporary version of which is Oneness Pentecostalism is heresy. But a Trinitarian issue on which there can be disagreement between true believers is the Filioque controversy—the issue of whether the Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father alone or from the Father and the Son note: While this issue was important enough to split the Eastern and Western churches—and has implications for the person of the Father or the divine essence conceived generally is the ground of the personal subsistence of the Son and the Spirit—nevertheless it does not undermine the unity or identity of the Three-in-One. Bibliology The authoritative basis for all theological discussion is Scripture. That means we have to ask: Does this teaching so distort the doctrine of Scripture that it undermines biblical authority? Does this teaching deny that authority in such a way as to invest that authority in oneself, another man, or a tribunal of men? A denial of the inspiration of Scripture would clearly place one outside the bounds of orthodoxy. This is no longer truly Christian, but humanistic, and as such it crosses the line into heretical doctrine. But there are some bibliological debates upon which true believers may disagree. One example would be the debate over the manner of inspiration. Some Christians rather naively believe that inspiration implies dictation only—i. Now, there were certainly times where that was the manner of revelation e. In general, Scripture is said to have been inspired by the superintending work of the Holy Spirit 2 Pet 1: The Spirit did not override the thoughts, intentions, and personalities of the authors of Scripture, but so sovereignly superintended them and worked with their thoughts, intentions, and personalities that they wrote precisely what the Spirit intended. Nevertheless, the dictation-only model of inspiration does not so undermine the character or authority of Scripture so as to preclude one from genuine Christianity. Conclusion The charge of heresy is a serious one. We cannot be trivial or frivolous in throwing around the term. If faithfulness requires that you do so, it will be important for you to ask the questions outlined above. We are indeed saved by faith alone, not by merely confessing faith alone. May we be found faithful stewards of the pattern of sound words entrusted to us as a treasure 2 Tim 1: He is also the pastor of local outreach ministries and pastors the GraceLife fellowship group at Grace Community Church. Articles from trusted TMS faculty and friends. A free eBook for your enjoyment.

9: ARMINIAN CONUNDRUM

The Calvinist to be consistent with all five points of their TULIP theology would reject the conclusion as would anyone who, like myself, also believes in eternal security. Therefore one of the premises MUST BE WRONG in order to consistently maintain perseverance of the saints and eternal security.

And Arminians love to remind Calvinists of this fact. While exploring the doctrines of sovereign grace, it usually takes, oh, about 3. The Arminian scrunches his face and rolls his eyes and usually dismisses the notion. But then again, how can he help the Arminian see his point? You might call it an Arminian conundrum. Now to be perfectly honest, the following argument is really only meant for those individuals who are Arminian by studied choice. Those who are unfamiliar with systematic theology, or young in the faith, should be gently shown what the Scriptures say. I usually just point to verses and let the verses speak for themselves. Just Imagine a Calvinist being shown 1 Timothy 2: He then responds as follows It is always the Calvinist speaking: Christians are especially precious in His sight. And since God would exhaustively know all the possible scenarios, as well as their outcomes, He would know exactly what to do, right? Why are you giving me a funny look? I mean really, surely the One who creates calamity Amo 3: Surely the One who directs the steps of men Pro Surely He could do it. Could God, who desires to see this Christian attain final salvation, remove the saint via death at some point before the apostasy occurs, thus sparing him eternal condemnation? Do you agree that God could do it? Interestingly, 1 Corinthians Because God has set a precedent. He can and has gone to great lengths to preserve His sheep. One might even say radical. Now this is instructive. Not one Christian would ever be lost, because for those Christians who might wander or stray, God could intervene and keep them from perishing, even if it means enacting death before the act of apostasy. Now if someone argues that 1 Corinthians They are admitting that God has a reason for not acting the same way with all Christians, when it comes to their final destiny. But wait a minute! If this is so, then you have just affirmed, in principle at least, the validity of the Calvinistic answer. And what is that answer? God has two wills or multiple desires. Indeed, He genuinely wants all men to be saved. Given the nature of these two desires and His eternal objectives, He determines to allow a number of non-Christians to persist in their unbelief and justly suffer condemnation. Or, Affirm that God has a reason or reasons for allowing some Christians to finally perish, even though He wishes none to perish and could do something about it. If you choose to adopt option one, then your Arminian perspective is forced to change. If you choose option two, then one of your favorite proof texts loses its sting. But more importantly, the second option shakes the Arminian foundation to the core, for it suddenly creates a tremendous amount of internal tension. All the angst that was once directed at the Calvinistic answer turns on the Arminian. That being said, mysterious elements certainly remain. Mystery notwithstanding, there is much we can glean from the Scriptures in this area. And so in conclusion, I would urge you, my dear Arminian, to consider a fine article by John Piper. You can read it here:

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