

Systematic Theology for the Local Church
#84-88—Soteriology—IV-VIII¹
Election to Salvation in Christ
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Particularly helpful for this set of five studies are:

- A. W. Pink, “The Sovereignty of God in Election,” available online at <http://www.reformed.org/books/pink/index.html>
- Loraine Boettner, “Unconditional Election” in *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, available http://www.the-highway.com/election_Boettner.html
- Bruce Ware, “Divine Election to Salvation: Unconditional, Individual, and Infralapsarian” in *Perspectives on Election: Five Views*, ed. Chad Owen Brand (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006). Skip the infralapsarianism part for now.
- R. C. Sproul, *Willing to Believe: The Controversy Over Free Will* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997). See especially the chapters on Arminius and Chafer.
- C. Matthew McMahon, “Amyraut and Hypothetical Universalism,” available at <http://www.apuritansmind.com/PuritanWorship/Amyraut%20Universalism.htm>
- David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas and S. Lance Quinn *The Five Points of Calvinism Defined, Defended and Documented* (P&R Publishing: Phillipsburg, NJ, 2004).

The following texts will prove particularly helpful for the next study—reprobation:

- →A. W. Pink, “The Sovereignty of God in Reprobation,” available online at <http://www.reformed.org/books/pink/index.html> ←
- Loraine Boettner, “Reprobation” in *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, available at http://www.the-highway.com/election3_Boettner.html I agree with Pink versus Boettner on crucial points, but Boettner has a lot of good things.
- Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941). Section on God’s election and reprobation.

For coming studies:

- Robert Reymond, “A Consistent Supralapsarian Perspective on Election” in *Perspectives on Election: Five Views*, ed. Chad Owen Brand (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic). This is also in his *Systematic Theology*.
- Bethlehem Baptist Church Staff, “What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism,” available at http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Articles/ByDate/1985/1487_What_We_Believe_About_the_Five_Points_of_Calvinism/
- Gary D. Long, *Definite Atonement* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2006).
- John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2007). J. I. Packer’s introduction is very valuable.
- R. C. Sproul, *Willing to Believe: The Controversy Over Free Will* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997).
- David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas and S. Lance Quinn *The Five Points of Calvinism Defined, Defended and Documented* (P&R Publishing: Phillipsburg, NJ, 2004).

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Along with predestination, one of the most controversial of all biblically related topics is election. In most local churches mentioning it is likely to cause instant polarization. Some believe one thing about it and some another and some reject the doctrine entirely. Certainly today it is not very fashionable to believe in sovereign election. It is really very sad that this situation has to exist. I believe that ultimately this is due not so much to the doctrine itself but to an unwillingness to submit to God’s authority and the words of Scripture. This is a key doctrine that has crucial and far-reaching connections with many other great works of God. The chart provided at the end of this study shows many of these connections. It will be expanded in the coming studies on reprobation and lapsarianism.

1. The doctrine of election is a biblical fact.

Election is God's sovereign choice in eternity past of individuals whom he intends to save and bring into his presence. There is a large amount of biblical evidence for the doctrine of election. The concept is presented in the Bible through many instances of words that denote choosing and selecting, as well as through texts that do not use these specific words. The words for choosing are also used for everyday selections made in life. To deny the existence of election is to deny that God has spoken in the Bible, yet some who name the name of Christ insist on rejecting it. Pelagius taught that, because human beings are free to accept the Gospel offer by themselves and can exercise their will to do so, there is no such thing as sovereign election. Pelagianism was condemned as heretical in 418 at the Council of Carthage, a rejection that was ratified at the Council of Ephesus in 431. **Therefore, to reject the doctrine of election is to accept a heresy and to be an opponent of biblical orthodoxy.**

In addition to being taught in many places in the Bible (it's found in the Old Testament as well as the New—remember, Abraham was chosen by God for justification) two NT books begin with the doctrine:

Eph. 1:4: For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

1 Pet. 1:1: Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ² who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood:

Neither Paul nor Peter felt that they needed to shy away from addressing election up front. In fact, Peter mentions it twice ('elect,' 'chosen') and makes it the main topic of the whole first chapter: his readers need to be reminded that, because God chose them, in their experience of trials they could count on him to take them safely through their difficulties.

Here are some instances of the terms that are used so extensively to describe election in the NT:

ἐκλέγομαι (*eklegomai*, 'choose,' 'make a choice')

Acts 13:17: The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt, with mighty power he led them out of that country,

1 Pet. 2:4: As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—

Eph. 1:4: For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight

ἐκλεκτός (*eklektos*, 'chosen,' 'selected')

1 Tim. 5:21: I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism.

1 Pet. 1:1: Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia

ἐκλογή (*eklogē*, 'selection,' 'choice,' 'election')

Rom. 11:7: What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened

2 Pet. 1:10: Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall,

αἰρέομαι (*haireomai*, 'choose')

2 Th 2:13: But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

προγινώσκω (*proginōskō*) and the related noun πρόγνωσις (*prognōsis*), both of which in salvation texts refer to establishing a relationship with or planning for someone. Here the translation is 'foreknew,' but it could also have been 'chose.'

Rom. 8:29: For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

2. Election is a sovereign work of God.

Ephesians 1:11 is a statement about election ('chosen') that is placed alongside a statement about the sovereignty of God:

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,

God's plan includes selecting people for salvation and planning their lives ('predestined') under his sovereign will that 'works out everything.' There is nothing in creation that could be excluded. God is sovereign over everything outside of himself. Romans 9 also teaches sovereignty in election:

⁹ For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son." ¹⁰ Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. ¹¹ Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: ¹² not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger."

Theologian and biblical scholar John Murray, longtime professor on the faculty of Westminster Seminary, says about this passage:²

As election is eternal, so is it sovereign. No passage shows this more clearly than Rom. 9:11, where the differentiation between Esau and Jacob finds its explanation in, and is directed to the vindication of, “the purpose of God according to election.” It is futile to appeal to the foreknowledge of God as in any way abridging or modifying the sovereign character of election. Rom. 8:29 shows that the term “foreknow” is itself differentiating and cannot mean the foresight of faith but refers to that distinguishing knowledge of God by which he loved the persons concerned from eternity.

3. Election is the cornerstone of the doctrines of sovereign grace.

Election is the *biblical, theological and logical starting point* for God’s work of saving sinners. It is the biblical starting point because Scripture puts it first in the sequence of God’s acts in Rom. 8:29-30, where God’s foreknowing, which here means ‘choosing,’ starts the chain of five things that God does for people that he saves:

²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Second, the great doctrines that describe how God saves sinners by his grace, overcoming their enmity by his own power, preserving them and bringing them into his presence—all have election as their basis. As seen in Rom. 8:29-30, there is a progression from choosing to marking boundaries to calling in space and time to declaring righteous and finally to bringing a sinner into his presence. This order of what God does cannot be switched around. In addition, the design of the Cross—what God purposed to do with the death of the Lord Jesus Christ—is closely connected with this sequence of doctrines, as we will see in this and subsequent studies.

Finally, election is the logical starting point because, as we will see in subsequent studies, God begins his work toward human beings with selection of some for blessing. This will become more clear as we study lapsarianism, the ordering of God’s possible acts toward human beings with relation to the fall.

Sovereign grace has traditionally been associated with the teachings of John Calvin and ‘Calvinism.’ Because many of our studies in soteriology will touch on Calvinism in some way, it would be valuable to attempt to clarify what ‘Calvinism’ means. Unfortunately there seems to be no agreed-upon definition. The line between Calvinism and other belief systems or positions within Christianity is drawn in many different places. Here are some of the uses of the term:

- The Reformed Church tradition
- Belief in a sovereign God, a worldview
- Belief in sovereign grace for salvation

² *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, Everett F. Harrison, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Carl F. H. Henry, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1960), 179.

- Belief in particularism (God chooses and provides salvation for individuals); for Reymond this is the hallmark of Calvinism; enables Amyraldians to say they are Calvinistic (see below in this study)
- Belief in the TULIP
- Belief in at least four points of the TULIP (T, U, I, P; see below on four-point Calvinism)
- Being non-Pelagian (I think this is a very valuable differentiator)
- Being Presbyterian
- Being biblical (too vague, but in one way could be very valuable)
- Following Calvin's teaching (too vague; which part of his teaching? He taught many things that any one person would have trouble knowing.)

Many Calvinists think of key doctrines of grace associated with salvation in terms of the mnemonic device TULIP. The history of the TULIP is important and bears directly on the content of this study.³ After the death of John Calvin, an opposition movement developed that was founded by Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius (1560-1609). A synod (church council) of the Dutch Reformed Church was held in Dordrecht, Holland, in 1618-1619 to address the controversy. 'Dort' was a contemporary colloquial English term for 'Dordrecht.' Hence, the meeting is usually referred to as the Synod of Dort.

The objections to Calvin's doctrines held by the followers of Arminius (Arminians) were formulated and published in a document called *The Remonstrance of 1610* (a remonstrance is a statement of grievances or objections). Arminius' followers were therefore known as Remonstrants. I have provided the text of the objections in the Appendix to this study. Here is a summary:

1. The divine decree of predestination is conditional, not absolute, i.e. election is conditional.
2. The atonement is intended to be universal—for all human beings.
3. A person cannot of himself exercise saving faith.
4. The grace of God is a necessary condition of faith but it is not irresistible.
5. Believers are able to resist sin but are not beyond the possibility of falling from grace if they do not remain in Christ.

Notice that the third point affirms human inability and depravity. However, the fourth point shows that depravity is not complete, since God assists the sinner in believing. Arminian depravity is partial.

The doctrine of the Remonstrants was condemned at the Synod and countered by a long document (Canons of Dort⁴) that is not a statement of faith but a judicial decision. The response contained the familiar points of the TULIP, although they were not presented in the later order of the mnemonic:

³ For a helpful discussion see David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas and S. Lance Quinn *The Five Points of Calvinism Defined, Defended and Documented* (P&R Publishing: Phillipsburg, NJ, 2004), Part 1.

⁴ Available at http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html?mainframe=http://www.reformed.org/documents/canons_of_dordt.html

T: Total depravity. Human beings are totally depraved and unable to come to God.

U: Unconditional election. God's choice of who will be saved is based on his sovereign will.

L: Limited atonement. Jesus' death was substitutionary for the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. (This is better described as atonement for particular or definite individuals, hence the terms 'particular redemption' or 'definite atonement.')

I: Irresistible grace. God's grace in calling an individual to salvation cannot be thwarted and is always effective.

P: Perseverance of the saints. Those brought to Christ will not fail to reach his presence.

It is important to remember that these doctrines are intertwined with each other and with other doctrines. What a person believes about one will affect what he believes about one or more of the others. I am convinced that the TULIP stands or falls as a whole. If we accept, for the sake of argument, that belief in the doctrines makes one a Calvinist, then rejecting even just one point would make one a non-Calvinist. Another way of looking at this is to say that rejecting even just one point results in an inconsistent system (we will see an important example of this later in this study).

4. Election is necessary because of total depravity.

The claim is often made that, if God acts sovereignly in choosing people who then will not fail to believe, he violates human free will. This assumes that the best thing for the human race is for individuals to be allowed to make their own choices for or against Christ. Obviously this places a higher priority on supposed freedom than on God's will and control.

But recall that in our studies in hamartiology we underscored that sinful human beings do not want to choose for the things of God. Our whole being, including our will, is under the control of sin. No one in an unregenerate state can believe in Christ, because he hates God and wants to avoid him. His will, mind and heart are corrupted. When Paul says in Rom. 9:11 that there is "no one who seeks God," he leaves no room for some set of people who have enough goodness in them to want to find God and obey the Gospel. The unsaved are dead in sin (Eph. 2:1) and as such cannot and will not come to God through any internal motivation or desire. Romans 9:29 teaches that without sovereign election no one would be saved:

It is just as Isaiah said previously: "Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah."

5. Election is unconditional, not based on foreseen faith, versus the error of Arminianism.

A. The essence of Arminianism

What does 'unconditional election' mean? Unconditional election is the biblical teaching that God's choosing of individuals for salvation is not based on anything that they might do or any virtue in them, including faith. To put it another way, the establishing of candidates for election is entirely God's work and decision. The alternative to this is 'conditional election,' espoused by the Arminian, which means that God chose individuals with reference to what they would do or be.

Under the conditional election view Eph. 1:4 means that in eternity past God “saw” who would believe and tagged them in his mind as one of the elect. Arminians attach special importance to Rom. 8:29, taking ‘foreknew’ (a translation of a form of προγινώσκω [*proginōskō*]) to mean only that God knew ahead of time who would exercise faith:

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Ware points out⁵ that for the Arminian

while it is true that God must provide grace (prevenient grace) for any to be enabled to believe in Christ, as both Arminius and Wesley believe, yet it remains entirely up to the individual whether he will believe. By necessity, in light of the supposed libertarian freedom of the individual, God cannot ensure that any person will believe. God does all that he can do, but the choice, in the end is up to us. Therefore, conditional election asserts human choice and action as that which is ultimately decisive in personal salvation. Put differently, at its most crucial moment (the moment of belief or disbelief), salvation is *of us*, not of the Lord.

Some Arminians will also hold that since it is up to the individual to decide for Christ, he can also withdraw his belief and thus become unsaved. Thus a person can go in and out of the group of the elect (see also below on the relation between election and individuals).

The Arminian view of ‘foreknowledge’ in Rom. 8:29 fails to take into account 1) the meaning of ‘foreknow,’ 2) the relationship between foreknowledge and the occurrence of events, and 3) the sovereign nature of election in the NT (e.g. Eph. 1:4)

B. The meaning of ‘foreknow’

We get a good idea of what Paul means in Rom. 8:29 from his use of ‘foreknowledge’ in Rom. 11:2:

God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.

Here ‘foreknew’ cannot mean that God simply knew about Israel before the nation existed. God did, of course, but it would be superfluous for Paul to say that. Most commentators agree that, in keeping with NT usage where salvation is the topic, ‘foreknow’ in 11:2 is equivalent to ‘plan for’ or ‘choose.’ Notice also that Paul does not say God foreknew ‘about’ his people. God foreknew *them*. This usage of ‘know’ is found in the OT with a Hebrew verb that *can* mean know in the sense of ‘know a fact’ but that in certain texts clearly refers to establishing a relationship. So we have, for example:

⁵ Bruce A. Ware, “Divine Election to Salvation: Unconditional, Individual, and Infralapsarian” in *Perspectives on Election: Five Views*, ed. Chad Owen Brand (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006), 5.

Gen. 18:19: ¹⁹ For I have chosen [lit. ‘known’] him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”

Jer. 1:5: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew [in the sense of ‘chose’] you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

Notice that interpreting the verb as ‘chose’ is supported by the use of ‘set you apart’ and ‘appointed’ in Jer. 1:5. God is talking about things that he *did* for the prophet.

Amos 3:2: “You only have I chosen [‘known’] of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins.”

As with Gen. 18:19 the NIV translators have elected to translate with ‘chosen.’ In my view they could have and should have done the same with Jer. 1:5.

Peter uses προγινώσκω (proginōskō) in 1 Pet. 1:20 of the Father’s establishing the role of the Son as a savior:

He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

Here the NIV translators (correctly, I believe) rendered the form of προγινώσκω (*proginōskō*) that Peter uses with the word chosen, as the context demands. I refer you to Douglas Moo’s fine commentary on Romans for detailed discussion of προγινώσκω (proginōskō) and the related noun πρόγνωσις (prognōsis).⁶

C. Foreknowledge and the occurrence of events

Understanding the meaning of these words shows the error of the Arminian when he thinks that God sees faith ahead of time and makes a person elect. But the Arminian also has a problem with the relation between foreknowledge and the occurrence of events. Loraine Boettner comments on this (underlining mine),⁷

Foreordination in general cannot rest on foreknowledge; for only that which is certain can be foreknown, and only that which is predetermined can be certain. The Almighty and all-sovereign Ruler of the universe does not govern Himself on the basis of a foreknowledge of things which might haply come to pass. Through the Scriptures the divine foreknowledge is ever thought of as dependent on the divine purpose, and God foreknows only because He has pre-determined. His foreknowledge is but a transcript of His will as to what shall come to pass in the future, and the course which the world takes under His providential control is but the execution of His all-embracing plan. His

⁶ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 532-33.

⁷ Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, available at www.ccel.org/ccek/boettner/predest.html, 55.

foreknowledge of what is yet to be, whether it be in regard to the world as a whole or in regard to the detailed life of every individual, rests upon His pre-arranged plan (Jeremiah 1:5; Psalm 139:14-16; Job 23:13, 14; 28:26, 27; Amos 3:7).

D. Foreknowledge and God's sovereignty

Gary Crampton has a valuable description of the relation of foreknowledge and God's sovereignty:⁸

Such a non-Christian view of permission and free will cannot coexist with omnipotence. Neither is the Arminian view of free will compatible with God's omniscience, because omniscience renders the future certain. If God foreknows all things, then of necessity they will come to pass; otherwise, they could not be "foreknown." God foreknew, even foreordained, the crucifixion of His Son by the hands of sinful men. The godless men who carried out the act are responsible for their sin (Acts 2:22-23; 4:27-28). Could they have done differently? Could Judas Iscariot not have betrayed Jesus Christ? To ask the questions is to answer them.

E. The failure of conditional election

Ultimately, belief in conditional election empties election of any meaning at all, as explained by Boettner (underlining mine):⁹

This, of course, destroys election in any intelligible sense of the term, and reduces it to a mere recognition or prophecy that at some future time certain persons will be possessed of those qualities. If based on faith and evangelical obedience, then, as it has been cynically phrased, God is careful to elect only those whom He foresees will elect themselves. In the Arminian system election is reduced to a mere word or name, the use of which only tends to involve the subject in greater obscurity and confusion. A mere recognition that those qualities will be present at some future time is, of course, an election falsely so-called, or simply no election at all. And some Arminians, consistently carrying out their own doctrine that the person may or may not accept, and that if he does accept he may fall away again, identify the time of this decree of election with the death of the believer, as if only then his salvation became certain.

The Westminster Confession addresses the issues of unconditional election and foreknowledge:¹⁰

III. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death.

V. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, has chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance

⁸ In "A Biblical Theodicy," by Gary Crampton, available at <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=141>

⁹ Boettner, 50.

¹⁰ Chapter III, Of God's Eternal Decree, sections III and V.

in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace.

There are many portions of Scripture that teach unconditional election. One of the clearest and most powerful is Acts 13:48:

When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

Certainly this verse teaches that the appointment to eternal life preceded in time the believing by the Gentiles here. And if there is a temporal priority, there must also be a corresponding logical priority: the believing depends on God's appointment to eternal life. In spite of the clarity of this verse, Arminians maintain their belief in conditional election, even in some cases explicitly changing the verse. Here is Ware's comment on one such distortion:¹¹

To make the Arminian understanding work here, it requires, essentially, reversing what the text actually says. Consider this explanation by a leading Arminian theologian, William W. Klein, *The new Chosen People: A Corporate view of Election* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 121: "The Gentiles believed and entered the category of the appointed ones." Notice that here Klein reverses the sequence, viz. their belief grounds and precedes their actual personal and existential appointment to eternal life. Of course, he can only do this by first suggesting that the so-called "category of the appointed ones" is an empty set until people enter it.

We will address later the individual nature of God's saving election that will demonstrate that Klein's misreading of this text not only involves his reversing of its order but also includes his (empty) corporate notion of election.

Romans 9:10-16 also constitutes one of the strongest biblical statements of unconditional election:

⁹ For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son." ¹⁰ Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. ¹¹ Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: ¹² not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³ Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." ¹⁴ What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." ¹⁶ It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

At first sight it appears that this passage is talking about selection for covenant blessings. But the chapter is actually about the question of who gets saved and who doesn't. Paul is saying that God's blessing Jacob and not blessing Esau involves salvation. And even though the issue with

¹¹ Ware, 9.

regard to Pharaoh is not salvation but obedience in letting Israel leave Egypt, there is a principle that applies to God's choice of who will be saved.

The passage teaches that God chose Jacob for blessing and Esau for loss without reference to anything they might do during their lifetimes. Verse 12 describes this as selection apart from human acts—"not by works." That Paul is talking about unconditional selection is clear from his use of typical questions that would be raised by objectors (and probably were during Paul's ministry). Verse 14, then, constitutes an objection to the unconditional nature of God's selection. The existence of such an objection means that there is an old-nature response to unconditional election: "This leaves Esau out in the cold. He wasn't the schemer, Jacob was. How can God be so tyrannical as to leave out human merit in that situation?" The line of Paul's presentation here in Rom. 9 is a powerful scriptural argument for unconditional election.

The same major section of Romans contains another striking statement of the unconditional nature of election—11:5-7:

⁵ So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. ⁶ And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. ⁷ What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened,

The text of v. 5 does not say that salvation is by grace but that election is by grace. Then Paul emphasizes it in v. 6, stating that election is not by works—something incompatible with grace. If election is by grace, it cannot come by God's foreseeing a person's faith. As Bruce Ware says, "Gracious election, in short, is unconditional election."¹²

John 10:26 constitutes another powerful point of teaching on unconditional election:

but you do not believe because you are not my sheep.

The sheep in this passage must be the elect of all ages—the totality of human beings who experience salvation. Notice that Jesus makes being one of his sheep a prerequisite for believing. The Arminian would like to reverse this, ending up with "you are not one of my sheep because you don't believe." But the text is clear: the identity of the group known as 'sheep' that the Father gives the Son (v. 29) exists before any of the sheep believe. Believing does not make one a member of the sheep group—the elect. Being one of the sheep—elect—will result in believing.

The details of Rom. 8:28-30 also provide a strong support for unconditional election:

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

¹² Ware, 12.

The description here of the acts of God will not fit with the Arminian view of foreknowledge and election. There can be no doubt that Paul is presenting in logical order the things that God does for sinners to bring them into his presence. All of these acts happen for each person who is saved. Calling in this context cannot refer to calling to service; it must refer to God's call of individuals to salvation—not the Gospel invitation itself but the work of God that brings a person to Christ, that is, irresistible grace. This is because calling is followed by justification. If it referred to the Gospel offer (as in 'many are called'), it could not be inevitably followed by justification, since some do not respond to the call. The existence of such a call is in itself evidence that the Arminian view is wrong; it cannot exist under that system. Foreknowledge here must have the meaning of 'plan for' or 'choose.' It is a statement of election.

Arminianism also rejects total depravity because it asserts that a person is able to accept the Gospel on his own. God gives 'prevenient' grace to all as an assistance to faith, but it is still up to the individual whether he accepts or rejects, showing that Arminianism rejects the doctrine of irresistible grace.

Arminianism is synergistic with regard to both election and salvation. When a person exercises faith he fulfills what God saw ahead of time, an act resulting in his being labeled 'elect.' In addition, that act brings salvation. So, God calls in the preaching of the Gospel and the sinner responds on his own. This is synergism.

For the Arminian there can be no TULIP at all: every point is rejected. Human beings are able to come to God, election is conditional, Jesus died for everyone, there really is no such thing as God's working to draw a person to himself, so there is nothing to resist, and a person who has believed can lose his salvation.

6. Biblical election is not hidden, hypothetical or part of a fall-back position for God: the errors of four-point Calvinism (a rejection of total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement and irresistible grace and ultimately perseverance of the saints)

A. General description of four-point Calvinism

It is safe to say that the majority of evangelicals today are either Arminian (as found in the Wesleyan and charismatic movements) or self-described four-point Calvinists. Virtually all dispensationalists fall into the latter camp. "Four-point Calvinism" is a term applied to themselves by some people in this camp. One of my conclusions in this section is that this position is not Calvinistic.

There is an instructive history behind this position. Moise Amyraut (1596-1664) was a 17th-century French theologian who taught at the French Protestant Academy at Saumur in western France. His doctrinal formulations were an attempt to soften some of the supposedly harsh features of Calvinism, and he is known for his attempts at reconciliation with Lutherans. In 1634 he published a treatise on predestination that included his idea of *hypothetical universalism*. His views—known as Amyraldianism—are an attempt to take a middle position between Augustinianism and Arminianism and they remain essentially intact today in the position of the four-point Calvinist, sometimes called the 'modified' Calvinist, 'hypothetical redemptionist,' 'post-redemptionist' or 'ante-applicationist.' In general in this study we will use the terms Amyraldianism and four-point Calvinist interchangeably.

Amyraut believed his views were consistent with Calvin's teachings. Critics during his day and down until our time have disagreed, however. I believe that this system is not biblical and not at all within the Calvinistic camp. Ultimately, its view of the nature of faith makes it Arminian and therefore Pelagian.

If he is able to articulate his position (and most are not), the four-point Calvinist says that he believes in four of the five points of the TULIP:

T: Yes
U: Yes
L: No
I: Yes
P: Yes

While proponents of this position claim to reject only the 'L' of the TULIP, their system actually forces them to reject at least four or even all of the points. The system thus collapses into Arminianism. **Warning: Don't expect this system to make sense: it doesn't hang together and has internal contradictions. Even using the word system is misleading, because it is so internally inconsistent.**

First Timothy 2:3-4 and 2 Pet. 3:9 are associated with the core of Amyrauldianism. Supposedly these two passages, in comparison with the rest of Scripture, show that God has two wills. He wants to save everyone, these passages say, yet other portions of Scripture and human experience show that not everyone gets saved. Here are the verses:

1 Tim. 2:3-4: ³ This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

2 Pet. 3:9: The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

This kind of thinking affects the four-pointer's view of the meaning of election and the purpose of the Cross. Here is a summary of Amyrauldianism/four-point Calvinism:

- God has two wills—one to save everyone out of love (this error is found today in the view that God loves everyone; we will address this in a future study) and one to save only the elect. This is buttressed by appeal to 2 Pet. 3:9 and 1 Tim. 2:3-4. The error prevalent today that God has two wills—one unfulfilled—comes from Amyraut. We will treat this at length in a future study.
- In order to make it possible for everyone to be saved who exercises faith, God made a provision of universal salvation at the Cross. This is 'universalism' regarding the value of the Cross and God's intention. This is an explicit rejection of limited atonement, or, better, particular redemption or definite atonement—the 'L' of the TULIP.
- God knows that because of depravity people will not believe, so he purposes to save some smaller set.
- The system contains a 'hypothetical universalism.' Hypothetically, everyone could be saved, because the value of the Cross is sufficient for all human beings. This is the basis for the

unbiblical saying often heard today to the effect that “The Cross is sufficient for everyone but efficient only for the elect.” It reflects the trend within Amyraut’s theology to unite universalism (God intends or wants to save everyone) and particularism (God intends or wants to save a limited set of identifiable individuals).

- Salvation is conditioned on faith, which all can exercise physically but not morally.
- Amyraut apparently believed that regeneration precedes faith, but four-point Calvinists today clearly state that faith precedes regeneration.¹³

The position of the four-point Calvinist amounts to saying that God provided a pool of merit that a person taps into when he exercises faith. This brings salvation, and regeneration follows. Jesus’ death on the Cross only provided salvation hypothetically: all can be saved, but only the elect will respond.

Gary Long summarizes Amyraldianism this way:¹⁴

It is God’s will [thelo] to save all men. Therefore, Christ died for all mankind without exception, placing them into a savable position. They can be saved upon the condition of faith. But, since none can believe because of being totally depraved, God out of His loving mercy and free grace, sovereignly decreed [boulomai] to elect some of mankind to be saved. This universal provision of salvation, made particular in application by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit and through the means of faith, makes all men responsible to believe and permits the free offer of the gospel to be genuinely made without preaching “tongue-in-cheek.”

B. Four-point Calvinism and election

Angus Stewart has a perceptive description of Amyraldianism/four-point Calvinism, particularly with regard to election:¹⁵

Amyraldianism is that false system of theology introduced by and named after Moise Amyraut (1596-1664), Professor in the French Protestant Seminary at Saumur. It may sound like an old and foreign error but it is being actively promoted in the British Isles and elsewhere today.

Amyraut promulgated and popularised a form of hypothetical universalism, that hypothetically God chose everyone to salvation and sent Christ to die for all absolutely.

Amyraut taught hypothetical universal *election*, that God decreed to save all men head for head on condition that they would believe. However, knowing that fallen man would not believe, God decreed to save His elect, to whom He would give faith.

¹³ See R. C. Sproul, “We Are Able to Believe: Lewis Sperry Chafer,” in *Willing to Believe: The Controversy Over Free Will* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997).

¹⁴ See “An Exegetical Study of 1Timothy 2:4” at <http://www.the-highway.com/1Tim2.4.html>

¹⁵ Angus Stewart, “Amyraldianism and the *Formula Consensus Helvetica* (1675),” available at <http://www.cprf.co.uk/articles/amyraut.htm>

Similarly, Amyraut proclaimed hypothetical universal *atonement*, declaring that Christ died for all men head for head on condition that they would believe. However, knowing that fallen man would not believe, God decreed that Christ would die efficaciously for the elect.

Amyraut claimed that his convoluted views were those of a Frenchman, John Calvin. They were actually those of a Scot, also called John: John Cameron, his favourite teacher.

Charles Hodge summarizes the novel views of Moise Amyraut (1596-1664) in five propositions (which are very different from the Synod of Dordt's Five Points of Calvinism):

- (1) ... the motive impelling God to redeem men was benevolence, or love to men in general.
- (2) From this motive He sent His Son to make the salvation of all men possible.
- (3) God, in virtue of a *decretum universale hypotheticum* [i.e., a hypothetical universal decree], offers salvation to all men if they believe in Christ.
- (4) All men have a natural ability to repent and believe.
- (5) But as this natural ability was counteracted by a moral inability, God determined to give his efficacious grace to a certain number of the human race, and thus to secure their salvation (*Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, repr. 1993], vol. 2, p. 322).

Now we are in a position to understand the connection between Amyraut's doctrines. If God loves everybody (His "benevolence, or love to men in general"), then He must in some sense elect everybody (hypothetical universal election). Similarly, He must in some sense send Christ to die for everybody (hypothetical universal atonement). But what do a general love and hypothetical universal election and atonement avail for those who never hear the gospel? Thus Amyraut posits a divine call, beyond the limits of the visible church and the means of grace, through general revelation (creation and providence) so that those who rightly use the light of nature receive the light of grace (the possibility of the salvation of unevangelised heathen). All this does not yet do enough for the reprobate (whether or not he hears the gospel) for he is still totally depraved. Thus Amyraut declared that everybody has the natural ability to believe (though not the *moral* ability to believe).

Notice that Stewart identifies 1) *an implicit and hidden hypothetical universal election* that is the basis for his universal provision of salvation and 2) *an explicit particular election*. God initially (chronologically or logically, it is not clear which) wants to save the whole world and so *chooses* to save the whole world. To accomplish this he sends the Son to die for the whole world. *This must mean that at some point in God's reckoning he wants and expects everyone to be saved*. Otherwise, Amyraut would never see a need in God for a universal atonement. Then God concludes (again, either chronologically or logically) that the first idea will not work and so chooses some who are called 'the elect' that he will draw to himself. The first part of the plan is a choice of people to be saved—everyone. It is a selection of everyone with an expectation that all will come. A selection of everyone in a group, as opposed to a subset, is still a selection, a choosing, an identification.

This dual election is a result of the built-in tension in the position, which is universalistic (God intends or wants to save everyone) and particularistic (God intends or wants to save a limited set of identifiable individuals). The two resulting elections are inconsistent with each other, of course, and the existence of both does not make sense. There is an internal contradiction. You can't have it both ways.

C. Four-point Calvinism and monergism

Because four-point Calvinists today assert that faith precedes regeneration, their position assumes that an unregenerate heart can accept the Gospel by acknowledging that it is good and right and that what Scripture says about the sinner and the need for salvation is true. Accepting the Gospel is thus an act first of all on the sinner's side. This means that salvation is not monergistic, a work of God alone, but synergistic. But the Bible teaches that salvation is monergistic: God offers the Gospel and turns the sinner to belief.

This synergistic *salvation* of the four-point Calvinist also amounts to *synergistic election* and is *ultimately the same as* the so-called election of the Arminian: an individual establishes himself as one of the elect by exercising faith. Election is not a sovereign act of God under Amyraldianism. In fact, there is nothing that resembles biblical election, even though today's four-point Calvinist cries loud and clear that he believes in unconditional election. He can't say election is unconditional if a person has the ability to believe without a new nature; *this implies that the sinner actually elects himself and it equals Arminianism.*

D. Four-point Calvinism and the design of the Cross

It is significant that this system must reject substitutionary atonement. When Jesus died in the place of sinners he did so in the place of others: he actually purchased people and turned God's wrath away from them. The Bible teaches that Jesus' death was for particular individuals and can therefore be described as particularistic. With regard to the value of the Cross, Amyraldianism is ultimately an inconsistent synthesis of universalism and particularism. A. A. Hodge (1823-1886), professor for many years at Princeton Seminary, describes it as a "novelty":¹⁶

Their own system [Amyraldism] was generally styled *Universalismus Hypotheticus*, an hypothetic or conditional universalism. They taught that there were two wills or purposes in God in respect to man's salvation. The one will is a purpose to provide, at the cost of the sacrifice of his own Son, salvation for each and every human being without exception if they believe — a condition foreknown to be universally and certainly impossible. The other will is an absolute purpose, depending only upon his own sovereign good pleasure, to secure the certain salvation of a definite number . . . This view represents God as loving the non-elect sufficiently to give them his Son to die for them, but not loving them enough to give them faith and repentance . . . It represents God as willing at the same time that all men be saved and that only the elect be saved. It denies, in opposition to the Arminian, that any of God's decrees are conditioned upon the self-determined will of the creature, and yet puts into the mouths of confessed Calvinists the very catch-words of the Arminian system, such as universal grace, the conditional will of God, universal

¹⁶ Archibald A. Hodge, *The Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 374-75.

redemption, etc. The language of Amyraldus, the ‘Marrow Men,’ Baxter, Wardlaw, Richards, and Brown is now used to cover much more serious departures from the truth. All really consistent Calvinists ought to have learned by now that the original position of the great writers and confessions of the Reformed Churches have only been confused, and neither improved, strengthened nor illustrated, by all the talk with which the Church has . . . been distracted as to the ‘double will’ of God, or the ‘double reference’ of the Atonement. If men will be consistent in their adherence to these ‘Novelties,’ they must become Arminians. If they would hold consistently to the essential principles of Calvinism, they must discard the ‘Novelties’.

When I first began to realize the truth of the doctrines of sovereign grace, I thought a lot about the four-point Calvinist’s supposed belief in unconditional election. I realized that there was a basic conflict between unconditional election and universal atonement. If God provided salvation for everyone, if there is a pool of merit that hypothetically anyone can draw from, as the four-point Calvinist holds, why would he select only certain people for salvation? And if God truly selected only some for salvation, why would he provide an infinite pool? God would be in conflict with himself. And if in some way in the four-point system a person actually comes to God through the ability to exercise faith on his own, then election is meaningless. Limited election is incompatible with universal atonement.

Gary Long describes Arminianism and Amyraldianism in terms of this conflict:¹⁷

In brief, the *Arminians* believe the *universal gospel call* supposes universal redemption and *universal ability*; the *modified Calvinists* believe the *universal gospel offer* supposes *universal redemption* and *total inability*.

E. Reformed rejection of four-point Calvinism

Reformed theologian Robert Reymond gives this evaluation of the position:¹⁸

While this scheme preserves for the Amyraldian the right to regard himself as “Calvinistic” (since he allows a place for the particularistic principle which is the hallmark of Calvinism), those creedal churches within the Reformed world which have adopted the Belgic confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, and the Westminster Confession of Faith have uniformly rejected it, for three basic reasons:

1. Amyraldianism is a logically inconsistent form of Calvinism in that its scheme has persons of the Godhead working at cross-purposes with one another: by decree the Son died with the intention to save all men, and by decree the spirit savingly applies Christ’s saving benefits to some men only. Each person’s labor cancels out the intention of the other’s labor.

2. Because the Son and the Spirit by their respective labors are both simply executing the Father’s “eternal purpose” for them, Amyraldianism implies that either a *chronological*

¹⁷ Gary D. Long, *Definite Atonement* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2006), 16.

¹⁸ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 477-78.

element, which in effect cancels the eternality of the divine purpose, or an *irrational* element, which in effect imputes confusion to the divine purpose, resides in the decrees, either element of which assaults the nature of God. Warfield rightly asks:

How is it possible to contend that God gave his son to die for all men, alike and equally; and at the same time to declare that when he gave his son to die, he already fully intended that his death should not avail for all men alike and equally, but only for some which he would select (which . . . because he is God and there is no subsequence of time in his decrees, he had already selected) to be its beneficiaries?¹⁹

He answers his own question:

As much as God is God . . . it is impossible to contend that God intends the gift of his Son for all men alike and equally and at the same time intends that it shall not actually save all but only a select body which he himself provides for it. The schematization of the order of decrees presented by the Amyraldians, in a word, necessarily implies a chronological relation of precedence and subsequence among the decrees [or the other alternative which, as we suggested above, is irrationality within the divine mind—author], the assumption of [either of] which abolishes God.²⁰

3. When it urges that the Bible teaches that both by divine decree and in history Christ's death, represented by it as unrestricted regarding its referents, was intended to save all men without exception (the doctrine of unlimited atonement), Amyraldianism must necessarily join forces with Arminian universalism which, as we have seen, shares this aspect of its vision and turn away from a real *substitutionary* atonement, which is as precious to the Calvinist as is his particularism, and for the safeguard of which, indeed, much of his zeal for particularism is due."²¹ But this is to wound Christianity as the redemptive religion of God fatally at its heart, for (unless one is prepared to affirm the final universal salvation of all men) one cannot have an atonement of infinite intrinsic saving value and at the same time an atonement of universal extension. One can have one or the other but not both.

F. Four-point Calvinism and conflicts in God

We frequently hear today the four-point Calvinist's assertion that there are two wills in God with regard to salvation: he wants everyone to be saved but, knowing that everyone will not be saved, wills that only a subset of humanity will be saved. Matthew McMahon puts it this way:²²

Amyraut emphasized the dual nature, or double nature, of the divine will. This meant that God has a universal, conditional will to save all men upon the condition of faith, but

¹⁹ Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, n.d.). 94.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 94.

²¹ *Ibid*, 94.

²² C. Matthew McMahon, "Amyraut and Hypothetical Universalism," available at <http://www.apuritansmind.com/PuritanWorship/Amyraut%20Universalism.htm>

that He also has an absolute and irresistible will which leads men to that faith. According to Amyraut, God, according with His unconditional will, savingly desired the salvation of the entire human race. God, he said, desired to give them redemption upon the condition of their faith.

It should be obvious that this results from the key tenet of Amyraldianism—the duality of God’s universalistic and particularistic desires.

I do not believe that there are two contradictory wills in God. If there were, it would mean that God is working at cross purposes with himself and cannot accomplish what he wills. McMahon says about this:²³

Amyraut has created a God who desires after those things which his omniscience has told Him He can never have. This means God is frustrated in His knowledge. He knows he will not save certain men, but He nonetheless desires their salvation because Christ hypothetically created a “way of possibility” for them. This would make God sin. He would sin in that He would violate His own mind and omniscience. He would go against that which He knows is true. He would desire the salvation of men which He will never regenerate. This would make God frustrated. He would be the ever-blessed, ever-miserable God.

In effect, Amyraut gave God a fall-back position. If one plan fails, there is another available. Sound like the impotent God Open Theism? Let’s examine the scriptures that are appealed to for this idea.

1. First Timothy 2:4 with context

2 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. ³ This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.

We need to ask what these verses really mean in their context. Here are three interpretations of this passage:

- The Arminian interpretation: God wants everyone without exception to be saved through their own free will. That some are not is due to their own rejection of Christ.
- The 4-point Calvinist interpretation: God wants everyone without exception to be saved by their faith. That some are not is due to their failure to believe. This leads to God’s second will or plan, that only the elect will exercise faith.
- The 5-point Calvinist interpretation: God wants to save people out of all classes of human beings.

²³ Ibid.

Here is an example of the second—from the commentary on 1 Timothy in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, written by Duane Litfin of the Dallas Theological Seminary faculty. It is safe to say that this represents the position of that school:

God desires that no one perish (2 Peter 3:9), that the entire human race come to know the truth through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who is the Truth (John 14:6). (Of course not all do come to salvation; Paul was not teaching universalism.)²⁴

Notice the clear statement of the conflict of two wills in God. Which of the three interpretations is in line with the meaning of the text? Here are several things that we should notice about the passage:

- The ‘everyone’ in v. 1, the objects of prayer, and the ‘all men’ of v. 4 are translations of the same Greek words (πάντων ἀνθρώπων, πάντας ἀνθρώπους). ‘Everyone’ would be an appropriate translation at both locations. It is highly likely that Paul is thinking of the same group in both cases.
- It would be impossible for anyone to pray for absolutely all people in authority. No one could know who they are. Therefore, the ‘everyone’ of v. 1 must not include all people in the world. If ‘everyone’ in vv. 1-3 refers to a limited set of people, who is in that set? Paul is giving examples of people to pray for, different groups: kings (v. 2) and people in places of authority (v. 2). Verse one can thus be understood as ‘pray for all kinds of people, people from various groups.’ As for the objection that ‘all’ must refer to the totality of humanity, there are many examples in Scripture where it does not. It does, however, refer to the totality of items within a particular set. The issue is to determine what that set is referring to. In this case the set is “people drawn from those with all types of settings in life.”
- It is very likely that Paul uses the word translated ‘all men’ in v. 4 to refer to the same concept: people from various groups. He is then saying that God desires that people drawn from all classes of human beings come to salvation.

Theologically, it is against all that we know about the Triune God to think that he could have two wills that conflict in any way. Gary Long addresses this:²⁵

God’s will as desire [*thelo*] proceeds from His inclination (nature), God’s will as decree [*boulomai*] is based upon His counsel and deliberation. (In reference to salvation, His counsel and deliberation took place in “eternity past” between the triune Godhead in the covenant or counsel of redemption.) Can God decree something contrary to His inclination or nature? No, humanly speaking, God chooses (i.e., decrees) in harmony with His Holy nature. And is it not true that what God’s soul “desireth [*thelo*], even that He doeth” (Job 23:13)? In summary, if God desires [*thelo*] to save all mankind absolutely, then each and every individual will be saved, for what He desires to do He does.

2. 2 Peter 3:9

²⁴Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:734

²⁵ Long, “An Exegetical Study.”

Here is the verse at issue, along with a significant portion of its context, along with 2 Pet. 1:10-11:

3 Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. ² I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles. ³ First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. ⁴ They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” ⁵ But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. ⁶ By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. ⁷ By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. ⁸ But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

¹⁰ Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Again, here is a typical four-point Calvinist understanding of v. 9. This is Kenneth Gangel of the Dallas faculty writing in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*. Again, notice the conflict of the two wills in God.

The words **not wanting** (mē boulomenos) **anyone to perish** do not express a decree, as if God has willed everyone to be saved. Universal salvation is not taught in the Bible. Instead those words describe God’s wishes or desires; He longs that all would be saved (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4) but knows that many reject Him.²⁶

Surprisingly, John Murray of Westminster Seminary—certainly not an Amyraldian—expresses essentially the same view of two conflicting wills:²⁷

God does not wish that any men should perish. His wish is rather that all should enter upon life eternal by coming to repentance. The language in this part of the verse is so absolute that it is highly unnatural to envisage Peter as meaning merely that God does not wish that any believers should perish. . . . The language of the clauses, then, most naturally refers to mankind as a whole. . . . It does not view men either as elect or as reprobate.

Here is what we should notice about the passage in relation to the problem of God having two wills:

²⁶Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:876

²⁷ From *The Free Offer of the Gospel* by John Murray and Cornelius Van Til, cited by Garrett Johnson in “the Myth of Common Grace,” available at <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=28>

- The ‘anyone’ who might perish in v. 9 must refer to the same people as are designated by the ‘you’ of the same verse. The verse would not make sense if this were not so. The readers of the letter were concerned that the events of the end times might cause some of them to die and miss knowing God. Peter is assuring them that God will bring everyone he has chosen into his presence. The ‘you’ of v. 9 must refer to the same people as the ‘dear friends’ of v. 8, and in turn the ‘dear friends’ of v. 1, the addressees of the letter.
- Now notice v. 10 of ch. 1. Why does Peter exhort his readers to make their calling and election sure? Because, although Peter *thinks* they are all true believers, it may be that some have stopped short of genuine faith. There may be some who understand a lot about the Gospel and the Christian life and are even reading or hearing Peter’s letter, yet are not born again. Peter wants them to make sure that they are. This teaching is found in other portions of the NT: for example, the whole book of Hebrews carries this message.
- In light of this information from ch. 1, we conclude that “He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” means that God will make sure that all of the elect among the readers of his letter will come to faith and salvation. This is an interpretation based on the immediate context of the verse in question, the context that is the whole book and the context that is the whole New Testament.

It would be valuable for us at this point to see the conclusions of some of the great theologians of the past. Here is Gordon Clark (1902-1985), American philosopher and theologian:²⁸

Arminians have used the verse in defense of their theory of universal atonement. They believe that God willed to save every human being without exception and that something beyond his control happened so as to defeat his eternal purpose. The doctrine of universal redemption is not only refuted by Scripture generally, but the passage in question makes nonsense on such a view. . . . Peter is telling us that Christ’s return awaits the repentance of certain people. Now, if Christ’s return awaited the repentance of every individual without exception, Christ would never return. This is no new interpretation. The *Similitudes* viii, xi,1, in the *Shepherd of Hermas* (c. A.D. 130-150), . . . says, ‘But the Lord, being long-suffering, wishes [*thelei*] those who were called [*ten klesin ten genomenen*] through his Son to be saved.’ . . . It is the called or elect whom God wills to save.”¹⁹

And Francis Turretin (1623-1687), Swiss-Italian theologian, who writes using a Greek text that has ‘us’ instead of ‘you’—the difference does not affect his argument:²⁹

The will of God here spoken of ‘should not be extended further than to the elect and believers, for whose sake God puts off the consummation of ages, until their number shall be completed.’ This is evident from ‘the pronoun *us* which precedes, with sufficient clearness designating the elect and believers, as elsewhere more than once, and to explain which he adds, not willing that any, that is, of us, should perish.’¹⁶

²⁸ Gordon H. Clark, *I and II Peter* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980), 71.

²⁹ Francis Turretin, *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae*, as quoted by David Engelsma, *Hypercalvinism and the Call of the Gospel* (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1980), 96.

And John Owen (1616-1683), English church leader and theologian, using the same text as Turretin:³⁰

‘The will of God,’ say some, ‘for the salvation of *all*, is here set down both *negatively*, that he would not have any perish, and *positively*, that he would have all come to repentance...’ Many words need not be spent in answer to this objection, wrested from the misunderstanding and palpable corrupting of the sense of the words of the apostle. That indefinite and general expressions are to be interpreted in an answerable proportion to the things whereof they are affirmed, is a rule in the opening of the Scripture. . . . Will not common sense teach us that *us* is to be repeated in both the following clauses, to make them up complete and full, namely, ‘Not willing that any of *us* should perish, but that all of *us* should come to repentance’? . . . Now, truly, to argue that because God would have none of those to perish, but all of them to come to repentance, therefore he hath the same will and mind towards all and every one in the world (even those to whom he never makes known his will, nor ever calls to repentance, if they never once hear of his way of salvation), comes not much short of extreme madness and folly. . . . I shall not need add any thing concerning the contradictions and inextricable difficulties wherewith the opposite interpretation is accompanied. . . . The text is clear, that it is all and only the elect whom he would not have to perish.

Finally, John Gill (1697-1771), English Baptist scholar, concerning the issue of the will of God and this verse.³¹

It is not true that God is not willing any one individual of the human race should perish, since he has made and appointed the wicked for the day of evil, even ungodly men, who are fore-ordained to this condemnation, such as are vessels of wrath fitted for destruction; yea, there are some to whom God sends strong delusions, that they may believe a lie, that they all might be damned. . . . Nor is it his will that all men, in this large sense, should come to repentance, since he withholds from many both the means and grace of repentance. . . .

My conclusions concerning these verses do not disprove the entire position of the four-point Calvinist, but they do show that passages that they depend on as key supports do not help them. A careful examination of each passage in its context reveals that God does not desire the salvation of all human beings. In 1 Tim. 2:3-4 God desires that people from all walks of life be saved. In 2 Pet. 3:9 God desires that all the elect among the readers of the epistle be saved.

G. Four-point Calvinism and Christian practice

The error of Amyraldianism/four-point Calvinism is not confined to the realm of studying election. It has ramifications for how we view God and how he saves sinners. Gary Long makes a powerful and valid evaluation of today’s evangelical scene:³²

³⁰ John Owen, 348-349. *The Works of John Owen*, volume 10. The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967, 25, cited by Garrett Johnson in “the Myth of Common Grace,” available at <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=28>

³¹ John Gill, *The Cause of God and Truth*. Baker Book House, 1980, 62-63, cited by Garrett Johnson in “the Myth of Common Grace,” available at <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=28>

³² Long, *Definite Atonement*, 4.

In many evangelical churches where the Lord Jesus is still formally acknowledged to be the only Saviour, the current teaching of the day, in reference to the design of the atonement, is that Christ has made it possible for all men to be saved. He did this by dying a provisional, substitutionary death for the sin of the world. However, the individual must, by his own free will, decide for himself whether or not he shall be saved before Christ's atonement becomes an actual substitution for his sins. Those who are more Arminian than Calvinistic in their theology assert that the atoning work of Christ did not and does not secure the salvation of anyone in particular. As a result of this teaching, particularly in America during the last two centuries, man's total spiritual depravity is often denied in practice by both evangelical Arminians and modified Calvinists, and the idea now widely prevails that Christ is offered to man's acceptance and that he must "accept Christ as his personal Saviour," "give his heart to Jesus," "open up his heart and let Jesus come in" in order for the blood of the cross to avail for him as a lost sinner.

Matthew McMahon describes the abandonment of non-Pelagian soteriology:³³

When one begins to slide from the Reformed position to the Amyraldian position, some or all of the following doctrines begin to appear in their writing, preaching or teaching: 1) That God loves all men unconditionally and with an eye to saving them all, if they believe—a power they autonomously possess, 2) That Jesus Christ died for all mankind as to secure the possibility of salvation for them all, 3) That God wills and desires the salvation of all men through an unconditional love for them, disregarding any thoughts of an eternal, unchangeable decree to salvation, 4) That God has two wills, one particular and one conditional, both without qualification as to decree or purpose, 5) That God gives all men a chance to be saved through Christ's atonement of "possibility", and so pleads with them, offering them the Gospel if they would believe.

Notice that both Long and McMahon mention the terms of salvation (this is the question of what a person must do to be saved) and the cheapening of the Gospel. Here is Long on the current emphasis on human ability in believing the Gospel:³⁴

Saving faith is viewed (if not by the preacher, then by the hearer) as a conditional work of man rather than a gift of sovereign grace. Hence, man is exalted, God is belittled, and the grace of God is cheapened.

H. Conclusion

I do not believe that four-point Calvinism is biblical or really Calvinistic. Some would say that it falls within the Calvinistic camp, but, in my view, because it holds that faith can be exercised without the new nature from regeneration, it actually holds to an Arminian and Pelagian view of sin and should not be considered Calvinistic. I am making this evaluation from the standpoint that if a position is Pelagian in any sense it cannot be Calvinistic. Recall that some people draw the line at different places.

³³ McMahon, "Hypothetical."

³⁴ Long, *Definite Atonement*, 6.

Remember that Reymond says that the ‘particularistic principle,’ namely that God selects individuals for salvation, is the ‘hallmark’ of Calvinism. Yet he also says that churches that hold to the Belgic confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, and the Westminster Confession of Faith have uniformly rejected Amyraldianism. If, as I am asserting, the error actually has both a universal and particular election, then it certainly is not consistent with historically Calvinistic election of a subset of humanity, and should be ruled as non-Calvinistic for that reason. However, the ultimate issue is not whether Amyraldianism is Calvinistic, but whether it is biblical. I believe it fails this test, also.

In addition, it has internal inconsistencies (a universal election plus a particular election, an assertion of total depravity plus the ability to exercise faith, a universalism that God knows can’t be fulfilled, an apparent change in God’s reasoning and God’s willing what he knows what cannot happen and so never does) that render it a non-logical system. Unfortunately, the great majority of evangelical Christians who are under this error do not have a clue as to what the system actually involves.

What is left of the TULIP? In actuality the Amyraldian/four-point Calvinist cannot hold to any of the five points except the perseverance of the saints, which really cannot stand by itself without the existence of the other doctrines:

- T: No; a person can exercise faith before regeneration that brings a new nature
- U: No; can’t say election is unconditional if a person has the ability to believe without a new nature; this implies that the sinner actually elects himself and equals Arminianism
- L: No; clearly Jesus provided salvation for everyone
- I: No; divine persuasion works in the sinner, but the error re faith/regeneration clouds this
- P: Yes; but can’t really stand on its own

We will treat Amyraldianism/four-point Calvinism at greater length in future studies, especially when we present the topic of the design of the atonement.

Perhaps the most important thing for us to take from this section is that the majority of non-Wesleyan, non-charismatic people naming the name of Christ today are under the error of this system that is unbiblical for many reasons.

7. Election is “in Christ.”

Ephesians 1:4 contains a precious yet much overlooked truth concerning the focus of election:

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

The words ‘in him’ in v. 4 refer back to the word Christ in v. 3. The Father carries out election ‘in Christ.’ Grammarians have wrestled with the unique usage of the preposition translated ‘in’ here. Ancient Greek seems to have no precedent for this use of the preposition in connection with a person. Does it tell us that election places us in Christ, or that it associates us with or that it is carried out in connection with Christ? There are other possibilities, too, but at the very least

we can say that the Lord Jesus Christ is at the center of the elective work of the Holy Trinity. This must be due to his sacrifice on the Cross and his life for the elect after their salvation.

8. Election is the basis of salvation

We should become accustomed to avoid thinking of salvation without thinking of election. The two cannot be separated. Election is the basis and reason for an individual's salvation and anticipates all that is to come in a relation with God. This is found clearly in 2 Thess. 2:13:

But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

There could be no clearer statement of an intrinsic connection between election and salvation than we find here. Of course, it is also a simple yet powerful statement of the existence of election. God saves through election. Salvation is the goal of election. When I read this verse, I do not see how anyone can reject the fact of election. Yet some do.

When Paul says that God "chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight" (Eph. 1:4), he is pointing forward to the time when the elect are in God's presence with sin put away. In this sense election guarantees eternal life. And just as election is the basis of salvation, the saved person can say that he owes his salvation to his election.

The Bible also tells us that salvation is the proof of election. If I am convinced of my salvation, I can point to the fact of my election. Paul describes this in 1 Thess. 1:3-4:

³ We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴
For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,

As we saw in connection with 2 Pet. 3:9, the Bible encourages us to make sure that we belong to God and does so by exhorting us to confirm our election. Here is 2 Pet. 1:10:

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure.

This does not mean that we are to work to make sure we are saved, but to assure ourselves using Scripture that we are genuine in the faith and are therefore one of the elect.

But there is yet another aspect of the life of salvation that is connected with election: dedication. This is taught in Col. 3:12:

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Election is designed to lead to good works during this life.

9. Election operates on individuals.

Recall that in our definition of election we included the feature of selection of individuals:

Election is God's sovereign choice in eternity past of individuals whom he intends to save and bring into his presence.

A significant Arminian error is the belief that election by God does not establish a fixed set made up of specific individuals. Because election is simply God's recognition of what human beings do, they determine the set. There is no control over the makeup of the set. In eternity past God could only look ahead and see belief by individuals and then ratify their actions by saying they are part of the set of the elect. Logically prior to such recognition, God could not say who could be in the set *or even that there would be anyone in the set!* Thus election initially only involved an idea that would be filled out in time. God is helpless in establishing the membership of the set. He can only see ahead of time who is going to be in it. This idea is called *corporate election*: God wants a group called the elect, but he does not have control over who is in it. It's a corporate entity (hence the name), a body of people, but the identity of its membership is up to human beings. This is strange, of course, but it is a logical consequence of the Arminian system in which individuals determine whether they are saved or not.

The Amyraldian/four-pointer also implicitly has this feature in his system. Being able to come to God by faith before regeneration means that the individual is the ultimate determiner of who out of the mass of humanity can be saved, and so the number of who will be saved is indeterminate with relation to God's plan. There can be no fixed set.

The Arminian who goes so far as to hold that a person can lose his salvation has a similar problem. People can enter and leave the set of the elect and enter and leave again, and so on. God hopes someone will be in the set as his plan for space and time draws to an end. He can see ahead of time who will be in and out, but he has no control over the membership of the set.

The biblical picture is that God's selection of whom he would save involves his identification of particular people in eternity past to receive the blessing of knowing him. Because this happened before the existence of space and time, it involved God's planning for some to be saved and some not. Romans 9 provides three examples of selection of individuals for blessing: God selected Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau and Moses over Pharaoh.

Because the Arminian view of election depends on random acts of faith generated by human beings, its view of the membership of the set of the elect is also countered by the biblical teaching that election is unconditional (as in Rom. 9). Human beings do not determine who constitutes the set of the elect.

The biblical teaching that election is God's sovereign work also supports individual election: God is able to and does choose who will be saved on the basis of his own will (Eph. 1:4 and Rom. 9).

John 6:37-39 provides teaching on individual election because it speaks of a set of believers that the father has given to the Son and also membership in the set by individuals ("I shall lose none of all that he has given me"):

³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day

Similar are Jn. 17:2, 24 and 10:16. We saw earlier Acts 13:48:

When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

Because some did not believe, that is, they were excluded, and others did believe, we know that God's work in election involves differentiation among individuals.

10. Election is validated by the existence of regeneration.

Regeneration is the unseen and unfelt work of the Holy Spirit that overcomes depravity and brings spiritual life and the capacity to please God and exercise faith. The existence of this work of God means that no one can come to God without having a new nature. If anyone is to be saved God must do the selecting and then draw that person to himself in space and time.

11. Election does not invalidate the offer of a free Gospel

Even though only the elect will respond to the presentation of the Gospel, “whosoever will may come” is always true. Only the elect will have the will to come. Our responsibility is to present the Gospel wherever we can, since we do not know who is elect and who is not. We are not responsible for who will respond. J. I. Packer's *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* was written to address this very issue.

12. Election does not exist without reprobation.

It is obvious that, if God selects some people for blessing, others do not get selected for blessing. This second path is called reprobation—the eternal loss experienced by the non-elect. The Westminster Confession has these statements concerning reprobation:³⁵

III. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death.

VII. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extends or withholds mercy, as He pleases, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.

But the Arminian objects: How could a loving God send anyone to a Christless eternity? We will deal at length with reprobation in the next study. Recall that Rom. 9 teaches that, if anyone is to

³⁵ Chapter III, Of God's Eternal Decree, sections III and VII.

be saved, it must come by God's intervention in the lives of individuals who hate God and are on their way to eternal separation from God. As for election's violating the love of God, we must remember that God is also a God of justice who must punish sin. If the Bible teaches that God operates with sovereign, unconditional election, then it must be right and not a violation of his entire nature, including his love. Whatever he does is right. Boettner underscores the necessity of the existence of reprobation:³⁶

Those who hold the doctrine of Election but deny that of Reprobation can lay but little claim to consistency. To affirm the former while denying the latter makes the decree of predestination an illogical and lop-sided decree. The creed which states the former but denies the latter will resemble a wounded eagle attempting to fly with but one wing. In the interests of a "mild Calvinism" some have been inclined to give up the doctrine of Reprobation, and this term (in itself a very innocent term) has been the entering wedge for harmful attacks upon Calvinism pure and simple. "Mild Calvinism" is synonymous with sickly Calvinism, and sickness, if not cured, is the beginning of the end.

13. Election is practical

Because they reject it or do not understand it, many Christians think that the doctrine of election is simply a dusty controversy and probably secretly wish it would go away. In doing this they miss spiritual blessings that are associated with this great portion of theology. Recall that in Eph. 1:3ff. Paul says that it is a great blessing that we have been chosen by God. Peter makes knowledge of election the bedrock of our ability to withstand trials. Election helps us to see our own sinfulness and helplessness and God's greatness and grace. It keeps us from pride and makes us thankful. It impels us to service because we know for certain that God selected us for a purpose. And it helps us keep our eyes on heaven because of the ultimate purpose of election—making us like the Lord Jesus Christ.

14. The goal of election is God's glory

One of the most stirring doxologies in all of Scripture comes at the end the long section of Rom. 9-11, in which Paul explains why not all of the nation of Israel is or will be saved.

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴ "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" ³⁵ "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

God operates by sovereignly selecting individuals for blessing. We will praise him for this throughout all eternity, and so should praise him now. Election calls for praise. The Westminster Confession includes our obligation:³⁷

³⁶ Loraine Boettner "Unconditional Election" in *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 58, available at www.ccel.org/ccek.boettner/predest.html.

³⁷ Chapter III, Of God's Eternal Decree, section VIII.

VIII. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men, attending the will of God revealed in His Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the Gospel.

15. Views of election of five key schools of theology regarding salvation

View:	Pelagianism	Arminianism	Amyraldianism “Hypothetical Universalism” “Modified Calvinism” “4-point Calvinism”	“Moderate” Calvinist	“High” Calvinist
Proponents		Most Arminians avoid discussion of God’s decrees.	From Moise Amyraut, French theologian from Saumur school; A.H. Strong, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Dallas Seminary, etc.	Majority of Calvinists	Minority of Calvinists
Design of the Atonement:	Universal	Universal	Universal	Particular individuals	Particular individuals
Election:	No such thing; human decision	Conditional; God ratifies human decision	Supposedly unconditional* but inconsistent	Unconditional	Unconditional
Calvinistic?**:	No	No; some call this “quasi-Christian”	Most claim to be; sometimes called “Low Calvinism”	Yes	Yes
Monergistic?:	No	No	Claims to be but isn’t	Yes	Yes
Parts of TULIP claimed:	Doesn’t apply	None	TUIP	TULIP	TULIP
Parts of TULIP actually held:		None	P or none	TULIP	TULIP
Prevenient grace?:	Doesn’t apply	Yes	Yes	No	No
Comments:	Emphasizes human free will; condemned as heresy by ancient councils	God elects those he sees will believe (“conditional predestination”); requires absolute human free will and ability to believe and so is Pelagian; no real interest in God’s decrees	Named after Frenchman Moise Amyraut (1596-1664); God provides salvation for all, but Cross-work effective only for the elect; many in this category claim to hold to “4-point Calvinism”;	Affirmed by Synod of Dordt	
Cons:	Many!	Many!	Usually claims to be Calvinistic, but is inconsistent and actually Pelagian; puts faith before regeneration; is Pelagian because it gives the individual the ability to come to God by faith, claiming to believe in total depravity but actually denying it. Lewis Johnson said this position is inconsistent, too. See Sproul, <i>Willing</i> , on Chafer.		

Notes:

- * Unconditional election: God chose some for salvation without reference to what they would do or be during their lifetimes.
- **What is Calvinism? Who is a Calvinist? The line is drawn in different places, so we hear many answers:
 - The Reformed Church tradition
 - Belief in a sovereign God, a worldview
 - Belief in sovereign grace for salvation
 - Belief in particularism (God chooses and provides salvation for individuals); for Reymond this is the hallmark of Calvinism; enables Amyraldians to say they are Calvinistic
 - Belief in the TULIP
 - Belief in at least four points of the TULIP (T, U, I, P)
 - Being non-Pelagian (I think this is a very valuable differentiator)
 - Being Presbyterian
 - Being biblical (too vague, but in one way could be very valuable)
 - Following Calvin’s teaching (too vague; he taught many things that any one person would have trouble knowing)

Appendix

The points of the Remonstrance of 1610 (From Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_articles_of_Remonstrance)

The Five Articles of Remonstrance contrast with the Five Points of Calvinism on four points and agree on one point (namely, total depravity). Article I disagrees that election into Christ is unconditional. Rather, in this article the Remonstrants assert that election is conditional upon faith in Christ, and that God elects to salvation those He knows beforehand will have faith in Him. Article II espouses unlimited atonement, the concept that Christ died for all. This stands in contrast to the limited atonement of Calvinism, which asserts that Christ only died for those God chooses to be saved. Article III affirms the total depravity of man, that man cannot save himself. Article IV repudiates the Calvinistic concept of irresistible grace, contending that mankind has the free will to resist God's grace. Article V rejects the notion that it is impossible for saints to become unsaved and asserts that the preservation of the saints is conditional upon the believer remaining in Christ. The text of the articles is given below.

- Article I - That God, by an eternal, unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ, his Son, before the foundation of the world, hath determined, out of the fallen, sinful race of men, to save in Christ, for Christ's sake, and through Christ, those who, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, shall believe on this his Son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith, through this grace, even to the end; and, on the other hand, to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving in sin and under wrath, and to condemn them as alienate from Christ, according to the word of the Gospel in John iii. 36: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him," and according to other passages of Scripture also.
- Article II - That, agreeably thereto, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he has obtained for them all, by his death on the cross, redemption, and the forgiveness of sins; yet that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins, except the believer, according to the word of the Gospel of John iii. 16: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"; and in the First Epistle of John ii. 2: "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."
- Article III — That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free-will, inasmuch as he, in the state of apostasy and sin, can of and by himself neither think, will, nor do anything that is truly good (such as having faith eminently is); but that it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through his Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good, according to the word of Christ, John xv. 5: "Without me ye can do nothing."
- Article IV — That this grace of God is the beginning, continuance, and accomplishment of an good, even to this extent, that the regenerate man himself, without that prevenient or assisting; awakening, following, and co-operative grace, can neither think, will, nor do good, nor withstand any temptations to evil; so that all good deeds or movements that can be conceived must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ. But, as respects the mode of the operation of this grace, it is not irresistible, inasmuch as it is written concerning many that they have resisted the Holy Ghost,—Acts vii, and elsewhere in many places.

- Article V — That those who are incorporated into Christ by a true faith, and have thereby become partakers of his life-giving spirit, have thereby full power to strive against Satan, sin, the world, and their own flesh, and to win the victory, it being well understood that it is ever through the assisting grace of the Holy Ghost; and that Jesus Christ assists them through his Spirit in all temptations, extends to them his hand; and if only they are ready for the conflict, and desire his help, and are not inactive, keeps them from falling, so that they, by no craft or power of Satan, can be misled, nor plucked out of Christ's hands, according to the word of Christ, John x. 28: "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." But whether they are capable, through negligence, of forsaking again the first beginnings of their life in Christ, of again returning to this present evil world, of turning away from the holy doctrine which was delivered them, of losing a good conscience, of becoming devoid of grace, that must be more particularly determined out of the Holy Scriptures before they can teach it with the full persuasion of their minds.

Questions for further study

There are a large number of definitions associated with this study found in the running compilation of key definitions. You will find them to be helpful in answering these questions.

1. Provide a definition of 'election.'
2. How do we know there is such a thing as election?
3. Why is rejection of election heretical?
4. How do we know election is a sovereign work of God?
5. What are the doctrines of sovereign grace?
6. What is the TULIP?
7. What is the Remonstrance of 1610? What are its main points?
8. What is the Synod of Dort? What was its result?
9. What is the connection between election and total depravity?
10. What is unconditional election? What is conditional election?
11. What is the difference between an Arminian and an Armenian? Which is usually taller?
12. How does the Arminian use Eph. 1:4?
13. What is 'prevenient grace'? Why is it important for the Arminian?
14. What does the Arminian claim about 'foreknowledge'?
15. What is the Arminian error with regard to the relation of foreknowledge and the occurrence of events?
16. Is Arminian election really election? Why or why not?
17. What is the relation between Arminianism and unconditional election?
18. What does Acts 13:48 teach about election? Why is this important?
19. How does Jn. 10:26 disprove Arminian beliefs?
20. What is the relation of total depravity to Arminianism?
21. What is the relation of the 'call' (Rom. 8:30) in Arminianism?
22. Is Arminianism synergistic or monergistic? Why?

23. What does Arminianism do with the TULIP?
24. Which points of the TULIP does the four-point Calvinist say he holds to?
25. Try to walk through in your head (i.e. without looking at notes) the main features of Amyraldianism/four-point Calvinism. What are the two steps or stages?
26. What is 'hypothetical universalism'?
27. What is 'particularism'? What is its opposite?
28. Why can we say that Amyraldianism actually has two elections?
29. What is the problem with faith for the Amyraldian system? Is Amyraldianism monergistic?
30. What does Reymond mean when he says that Amyraldianism has the Persons of the Trinity working at cross-purposes with each other?
31. Why does Amyraldianism actually have conflicts in God himself?
32. What does the four-point Calvinist believe about 1 Tim. 2:1? What does the verse mean in context?
33. How does the four-point Calvinist use 2 Peter 3:9, and what does it mean in context?
34. In what way is Amyraldianism/four-point Calvinism actually Pelagian?
35. What kinds of errors in practice does Amyraldianism/four-point Calvinism lead to or foster?
36. What are the basic differences between Arminianism and Amyraldianism (it's easy to get the terms confused)?
37. In what way is election the basis for salvation?
38. What are the problems associated with the Amyraldian/four-point Calvinist's indefinite set of elect people? Why does this actually amount to non-election? What are the biblical evidences against it?
39. Evaluate this: "If God does this thing called election, then we can't tell an audience of people that God wants them to accept Christ."
40. Why does election imply reprobation?
41. How do we know that God uses election for his glory?
42. Please be able to explain the points in the table.

Running compilation of key definitions

1. Systematic theology: The organized presentation of all that the Bible teaches about God and His works.
2. Exegesis: The actual practice of studying or interpreting a document or other message to determine its meaning.
3. Context: Context in a document or utterance is the surroundings of a portion of a word, a word, or a group of words.
4. Bibliology: The doctrinal study of the nature of the Bible.
5. Biblical authority: The quality inherent in Scripture by virtue of which human beings are completely answerable to its content.
6. Revelation: The information about Himself given by God to human beings.
7. General revelation: God's disclosure of Himself, available directly to everyone, given through means other than dreams, visions, direct words and Christ Himself.
8. Special revelation: The disclosure of information from God that is not available directly to all human beings.
9. Inspiration: A term applied to the Bible denoting that it is the product of God's creative activity, figuratively breathed out from Him (2 Tim. 3:16); applies to the process of recording Scripture, not specifically to the people involved; actually, *expiration* would be a better term to reflect the concept of 2 Tim. 3:16; the result is *inerrancy*.
10. Textual criticism: The science and art of attempting to discover the original text of a literary work for which the original document does not exist. It is especially important for biblical studies, and the foundational endeavor to all subsequent investigation of the Scriptures.
11. Canon: Transliterated from a Greek Word meaning 'standard'; as used of the Bible, it refers to books authenticated as possessing divine origin and therefore authoritative; the Jewish canon consists of thirty-nine books, the Protestant of sixty-six and the Catholic of eighty (including apocryphal books).
12. Inerrancy is a term applied to the Bible, although not specifically found in it; it denotes that the Bible, as originally written, possessed no humanly induced deviations from the message God intended to be recorded and that it is true in every respect; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Pet. 2:19.
13. Infallibility: Although some assert that this term has a different meaning from inerrancy, the two terms are, for purposes of biblical study, synonymous; the Bible is infallible because inerrant, and inerrant because infallible.
14. Illumination is the teaching ministry of the Spirit of God that imparts understanding of the message of Scripture to the believer; not to be confused with inspiration, which in the Bible is used of the work of God in giving Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16); 1 Jn. 2:20; Jn. 16:13.
15. Spirituality: God is not physical, but immaterial, incorporeal, invisible and alive.
16. Self-existence/Aseity: God exists independently of anything else. He is self-existent.
17. Immensity: God is infinite in relation to space.
18. Eternality: God is infinite with regard to time.
19. Simplicity: God is not a plurality and cannot be looked at as divisible into parts.
20. Pure actuality: There is nothing about God that is potential. He is not unfinished in any way.
21. Necessity: God is uncaused and exists because he must exist.
22. Immutability: God is unchanging and unchangeable.
23. Impassibility: God is incapable of being changed or disturbed by what he experiences and is incapable of suffering.
24. Transcendence: God and the world are distinct; he is not part of the world, and the world is not part of him.

25. Immanence: God is present in the world.
26. Infinity: There are no limits to God's person and his perfections.
27. Omnipotence: God can do whatever he wills.
28. Omniscience: God knows everything there is to know.
29. Omnipresence: God is present everywhere in his creation
30. Holiness: God is morally pure and separated from all moral evil and sin.
31. Goodness: A quality that describes or includes his love, benevolence, mercy and grace
32. Truth: God's person, actions, knowledge and revelations correspond to reality
33. Love: God's continual communication of himself to his creatures.
34. Benevolence: God's goodness toward his creatures.
35. Mercy: God's goodness toward those who are helpless.
36. Grace: God's goodness toward sinners.
37. Glory: The greatness of God's perfections.
38. Trinity: There is only one true God, existing as a single Being comprised of three Persons who are equal in every way, yet distinct in their tasks and relations to humanity.
39. God's decree: The decree of God is his plan for the universe that includes all things and is certain to come to pass.
40. Providence: God's care for and upholding of his creation.
41. Sovereignty: God's control over his universe.
42. Christology: The study of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.
43. Incarnation: The joining of deity and humanity in one person forever. The word is based on the Latin word for flesh: the Lord Jesus Christ is God joined with human flesh.
44. Pre-existence: Used of the Son, it means that he existed before Bethlehem.
45. Theophany: An appearance of God.
46. Christophany: An appearance of Christ.
47. Priesthood: The system that God established to remedy the problem of alienation between a holy God and sinful human beings.
48. Son of God: A name for Jesus that describes his deity and his approval by the Father at the resurrection.
49. Son of Man: A messianic name for Jesus that emphasizes his humanity backed by deity and his role of taking humans to God through suffering and humiliation.
50. Messiah: A transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning 'anointed one'; used of the expected national deliverer of Israel; the linguistic equivalent of Greek *christos*, 'Christ'.
51. Efficacious grace: Efficacious grace is the working of God in an individual that cannot be thwarted and that leads that person to faith in Christ. It is also described as effective calling and irresistible grace.
52. Regeneration: Regeneration is the unseen and unfelt work of the Holy Spirit that overcomes depravity and brings spiritual life and the capacity to please God and exercise faith.
53. Spirit baptism is the nonphysical act of the Spirit of God that places a believer in the Body of Christ and makes him a partaker, along with all other believers, of the work and merits of Christ; should be distinguished from filling, sealing, and indwelling; cannot be felt or noticed, and hence must be appropriated by faith; there is no warrant in Scripture for assuming a second act of God for power, a 'baptism,' after salvation.
54. Sealing is a guarantee that the believer will persevere in Christ all the way to entrance into heaven, when God completes his work of purchasing the individual. It begins at the moment of salvation when the Father places the Holy Spirit in the believer for permanent indwelling. It is unseen and unfelt and should result in praise and obedience to the Spirit.

55. Indwelling is the spiritual presence of the Holy Spirit in every individual who has placed personal trust in Christ as Savior. Described in Jn. 14:17, this is the basis of His other ministries to the believer, such as sealing, anointing and filling and establishes the believer as a part of the spiritual temple that God is building today.
56. The filling of the Spirit is 1) A constant characteristic of a believer's life that consists of regular control by the Spirit that produces Christlikeness through Scripture; 2) A special enablement at particular times for service during the first century.
57. A spiritual gift is a God-given ability for service.
58. A cessationist (with regard to spiritual gifts) is a person who holds that the miraculous gifts are not present in the Church today as part of God's plan.
59. A continualist (with regard to spiritual gifts) is a person who holds that the miraculous gifts are present in the Church today as part of God's plan.
60. An angel is an individual, personal spirit being originally created by God to assist him in his plan for saving the elect.
61. The cosmos is Satan's organized spiritual system, in rebellion against God.
62. A demon is a fallen angel that is free to assist in carrying out Satan's plan of opposition to God.
63. Biblical anthropology is the study of what the Bible teaches about the nature and purpose of human beings.
64. Hamartiology is the study of sin and its consequences.
65. Sin is anything that is unlike God himself.
66. Personal sin is what occurs when we do something that is unlike what God would do.
67. Inherited sin is the pollution we have from our first parents, the inward bent toward sin. This is sometimes called the sinful nature or the sin nature.
68. Original sin means that all human beings have been affected by the fall.
69. Total depravity describes the extent of the result of our possessing a sinful nature—every part of a person is affected by sin.
70. Total inability means that in his unregenerate state no one is able to do anything that pleases God or seek God or turn to him in response to the Gospel.
71. Pelagianism is a fifth-century error that rejects original sin, total depravity and the bondage of the will to sin.
72. Imputed sin is God's assigning the act of Adam to other human beings. His act is our act in the reckoning of God.
73. Soteriology is the study of what the Bible teaches about salvation.
74. Predestination is God's outworking of his plan for the universe under his sovereign control. The term is often used particularly of his sovereign purpose for human beings and its outworking.
75. Election is God's sovereign choice in eternity past of individuals whom he intends to save and bring into his presence.
76. Unconditional election is God's choosing of individuals for salvation without reference to anything that they might do or any virtue in them, including faith.
77. Conditional election is God's choosing of individuals for salvation based on some act or quality in them.
78. Particularism: God chooses and provides salvation for individuals.
79. Universalism: God provides salvation for everyone.
80. TULIP: A mnemonic device capturing the five doctrines of sovereign grace: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints.

81. The Remonstrance of 1610: A document composed by followers of Jacob Arminius that gave five points of objection to Calvin's teachings: conditional election, universal atonement, need for divine assistance to faith, irresistible grace, non-perseverance of saints.
82. Synod of Dort: Church council held in 1618-1619) to address the Remonstrance of 1610.
83. Arminianism: System of describing the saving work of God that generally follows the teachings of Jacob Arminius and denies the points of the TULIP. Found in Wesleyan and most charismatic groups today.
84. Westminster Confession of Faith: A Reformed confession of faith based on teachings of John Calvin. Drawn up in 1656 by the Westminster Assembly. Influential particularly in Presbyterian churches to this day.
85. Prevenient grace: divine grace that precedes faith, allowing the individual to use God-given free will to choose for Christ or to reject him. It enables but does not ensure the exercise of faith. Thus faith or non-faith is still the work of the individual. Feature of Arminian and Amyraldian theology.
86. Amyraldianism: A system of belief about the saving work of God patterned on the teachings of French theologian Moise Amyraut. Its current manifestation is four-point Calvinism, which claims to deny only the "L" of the TULIP, but when compared with Scripture ends up actually holding nothing of the TULIP. Holds to hypothetical universal atonement and particular election (salvation is available for everyone, but only the elect will come), but is inconsistent.
87. Particular redemption: Jesus died a substitutionary death in the place of specific individuals to provide everything necessary for them to reach the presence of God. See 'definite atonement.' Stresses individual redemption, as opposed to universalism.
88. Definite atonement: Jesus died a substitutionary death in the place of specific individuals to provide everything necessary for them to reach the presence of God. See 'particular redemption.' Stresses atonement that actually redeems, as opposed to the hypothetical universalism of Amyraldianism.