

TULIP: A FREE GRACE PERSPECTIVE

PART 1: TOTAL DEPRAVITY

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I. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of doctrine due to continued hybridization has produced a myriad of theological persuasions. The only way to purify ourselves from the possible defects of such “theological genetics” is, first, to recognize that we have them and then, as much as possible, to set them aside and disassociate ourselves from the systems which have come to dominate our thinking. In other words, we should simply strive for truth and an objective understanding of biblical teaching.

This series of articles is intended to do just that. We will carefully consider the truth claims of both Calvinists and Arminians and arrive at some conclusions that may not suit either.¹ Our purpose here is not to defend a system, but to understand the truth. The conflicting “isms” in this study (Calvinism and Arminianism) are often considered “sacred cows” and, as a result, seem to be solidified and in need of defense. They have become impediments in the search for truth and “barriers to learning.” Perhaps the emphatic dogmatism and defense of the paradoxical views of Calvinism and Arminianism have impeded the theological search for truth much more than we realize. Bauman reflects,

I doubt that theology, as God sees it, entails unresolvable paradox. That is another way of saying that any theology that sees it [paradox] or includes it is mistaken. If God does not see theological endeavor as innately or irremediably paradoxical,

¹ For this reason the author declines to be called a Calvinist, a moderate Calvinist, an Arminian, an Augustinian, a Thomist, a Pelagian, or a Semi-Pelagian. Accepting such a categorization would leave in its wake a doctrine or position to be defended rather than a willingness to change if the search for truth should demand it. It seems better to seek the truth than to attempt to be the authority.

that is because it is not. Paradox is not a phenomenon natural to theology. Theological paradox is a mirage.²

As an example of theological “paradox,” some see God’s sovereignty over all things and man’s ability to make free choices to be a paradox which cannot be explained, only accepted and lived-with. They conclude that either God is sovereign or man is free, but not both. “It’s a mystery, my son” is not an acceptable explanation in the mentality of man. In no other realm are we satisfied to be put off by such “take-it-by-faith” extenuations. Only three conclusions are logically possible: 1) either one or the other is correct, 2) neither one nor the other view is correct, or 3) both are correct (true) but have not, heretofore, been understood adequately, expressed properly, or defined in such a way as to avoid contradiction. It seems that the latter alternative represents the real situation in the consideration of TULIP. This and following articles will propose solutions to the enigmas that exist and reconcile the supposed paradoxes that have arisen from the debate between Calvinism and Arminianism as represented in TULIP.

II. WHAT IS “TULIP”?

TULIP is both an acrostic and an acronym. As an acrostic, each letter stands as the first letter of a particular doctrine or theological truth claim which helps one recall that teaching. As an acronym, the term signifies the essence of Calvinism (or what some might call Extreme or Hyper-Calvinism).³ The mere mention of TULIP often raises strong emotions, either positively or negatively. Some react with a favorable feeling, such as would normally be expected at the mention of one’s mother, America, or apple pie. Others respond quite negatively to the term, rejecting its implications of predestination, divine election, and eternal security. Those not at all familiar with the term may simply picture a flower from Holland and start tiptoeing away.

² Michael Bauman, *Pilgrim Theology: Taking the Path of Theological Discovery* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 19.

³ Edwin H. Palmer in dealing with these points in his defense of Calvinism says, “Calvinism is not restricted to five points: It has thousands of points” and asserts that “it is as broad as the Bible” (*The Five Points of Calvinism* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972], 5).

The intention of this and following articles is to appropriately state and analyze each of the doctrines represented by TULIP by: 1) establishing, as necessary, a brief history of the doctrines involved, 2) presenting clearly the Calvinistic and Arminian views of each doctrine, 3) explaining the related doctrines upon which the discussion or view may hinge, and then 4) proposing a carefully worded, logically correct, and biblically accurate solution to each of the five points of Calvinism and Arminianism.

In the study of Systematic Theology one should be constantly aware that its subjects, while necessarily considered one at a time and/or in sequence, must never simply be “pigeon holed” or relegated to mere categorization without respect to truths of other related doctrines. On the contrary, one can readily see that, for instance, the study of the doctrine of salvation could never rightly be severed from an understanding of God Himself (His nature and attributes), sin (the fall of Adam), Israel, the Church, or last things (the future accomplishment of God’s plan for the saved and the lost). Indeed, one doctrine tends to relate to and hinge upon the others. Similarly, as will be shown, the teachings of TULIP so interrelate that each depends upon the other.⁴ In the acrostic:

“**T**” stands for *Total Depravity* and involves the implications and ramifications of Adam’s original sin upon himself and his physical descendants.

“**U**” is for *Unconditional Election* and teaches God’s eternal selection of certain human beings for eternal salvation, which selection was not caused by anything meritorious done by fallen man.

“**L**” represents the teaching of *Limited Atonement*, the assertion that the death of Christ was intended to eternally save only those who were unconditionally chosen by God from the realm of depraved humanity, but not every single human person.

“**I**” designates *Irresistible Grace* which asserts that the depraved, yet chosen person for whom Christ’s death was in-

⁴ For instance, Palmer includes in his chapter on Irresistible Grace a discussion of Limited Atonement, Unconditional Election, and Total Depravity (ibid., 60-66). Robert L. Dabney confirms the interrelationship of the five points by defending them saying, “Discarding the order of the five points [of Calvinism] I will exhibit the theory in its logical connection” (*Lectures in Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972], 580).

tended cannot (or is not able to) resist the Holy Spirit's application of the provisions of Christ's death.

Finally, the "P" points to the *Perseverance of the Saints* (i.e., those totally depraved humans who were unconditionally chosen, redeemed specifically by Christ, and recipients of Spirit-applied grace) in holiness and faith until the end of their earthly lives.

Arminians and Calvinists, as well as those who do not associate themselves with either of these major doctrinal positions, usually have positive or negative opinions of these doctrines, but do not know how or when they developed. The following is a brief history of the development of these doctrines into their present form.

III. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF TULIP

The Reformation period of the Church began in the early 16th Century with three rising theologians: Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) in Switzerland, Martin Luther (1483–1546) in Germany, and John Calvin (1509–1564) in France, all of whom were within the Roman Catholic Church hybridization. Each one developed a scriptural understanding that the salvation of mankind is a result of God's grace, not the obligatory response of God to human effort. With the spread of their teaching the Reformation doctrines swept throughout Europe and a political dispute developed in the Netherlands and elsewhere leading to a revolt against Philip II, the King of Spain.⁵ Jellema explains,

The "seventeen provinces" revolted against Philip under the leadership of William of Orange (1568), with the Calvinists playing the role of militant and influential minority. Calvinism was the religion favored by the state. The first national synod was held in 1578. As the revolt went on, the N Lowlands drove out the Spanish, while the revolt was slowly crushed in

⁵ Philip II (1527–1598) was King of Spain from 1556 and was the son of Charles V of Spain and Isabella of Portugal. J.G.G. Norman states, "He became Europe's most powerful monarch, ruling Spain, Naples and Sicily, Milan, the Netherlands, Franche Compte, Mexico, and Peru...He reactivated the Inquisition in Spain, using it to establish his absolute power. Revolt, however, continued in the Netherlands, resulting in the independence of the Dutch republic (1579)" ("Philip II," in *New International Dictionary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978], 773).

the south, which thus remained Catholic. By 1609, when a Twelve Year Truce recognized for all practical purposes the independence of the north, the Calvinists were free to turn to difficulties within their own ranks.⁶

Preceding the time of this revolt and political upheaval the Dutch theologian, Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), who had studied under Theodore Beza (Calvin's successor in Geneva), came to minister in the Reformed congregation in Holland in A.D. 1588. While there he came to reject the Calvinistic teachings and, after leaving his pastorate, taught his views at the University of Leyden. This produced a number of followers. After his death in 1609 his disciples wrote a document known as the *Remonstrance* which, Clouse explains:

outlines the system known as Arminianism. The major points of departure from strict Calvinism are that (1) the decree of salvation applies to all who believe on Christ and who persevere in obedience and faith; (2) Christ died for all men; (3) the Holy Spirit must help men to do things that are truly good (such as having faith in Christ for salvation); (4) God's saving grace is not irresistible; (5) it is possible for those who are Christians to fall from grace.⁷

His followers became known as Arminians (after Arminius himself) or Remonstrants (after the document which set forth their views) and carried on his teaching.

In response to the clearly expressed teachings of Arminius and his followers set forth in the *Remonstrance*, a synod was held in the Dutch town of Dort (Dordrecht) in 1618–1619, which led to a doctrinal standard in the Dutch Reformed Church called the “Canons of the Synod of Dort.” Toon says,

Judging the Remonstrants by their writings, then, the synod not surprisingly concluded that they were not orthodox. The Canons were written to summarize the orthodox position against the Remonstrants, and affirmed total depravity (i.e., man, after the fall, cannot choose to serve God), unconditional election (God's choice of the elect is not conditioned on any action by them), limited atonement (Christ died for the elect

⁶ Dirk Jellema, “Dutch Reformed Church,” in *New International Dictionary*, 317.

⁷ Robert G. Clouse, “Arminianism,” in *New International Dictionary*, 70.

only, since those He died for are saved), irresistible grace (divine grace cannot be rejected by the elect), and perseverance of the saints (once elect, always elect).⁸

There have been some major variations of these two views. In the Arminian camp, probably the major diversion is that of John Wesley (1703–1791).⁹ Departing from the Dortian Calvinism are the teachings of Moses Amyrald (or Moïse Amyraut, 1596–1664), a French Protestant theologian who took issue with the conclusions of the Synod of Dort and

⁸ Peter Toon, “Dort, Synod of,” in *New International Dictionary*, 309-310.

⁹ For instance, John Wesley held to the unity of the race and the imputation of Adam’s guilt (*Sermons* I, XI. 534; *Works*, VIII. 227) and says that the human will has the ability and liberty to act and choose freely (*Works*, VII. 285; *Sermons*, VII. 228-229). He reconciles the contradictory aspects of death in Adam and man’s freedom to act and choose by postulating that there are two works of grace in salvation: one to restore the ability of man and the other to actually save man. The former, he calls preventing (or prevenient) grace which is understood to be a “preparing grace” from God which is given to all men so as to enable them to adequately respond to the truth of the gospel. It may be defined as “that grace which ‘goes before’ or prepares the soul for entrance into the initial state of salvation” and is the “preparatory grace of the Holy Spirit exercised toward man helpless in sin. As it respects the impotent, it is enabling power. It may be defined, therefore, as that manifestation of the divine influence which precedes the full regenerate life” (Paul Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1989, 496 quoting Wiley, *Christian Theology*, 2:346). Following the enabling quality of prevenient grace comes repentance. Wesley says, “Salvation is carried on by convincing grace, usually in Scripture termed repentance; which brings a larger measure of self knowledge, and a farther deliverance from the heart of stone” (Wesley, *Sermons*, LXXXV. 509). The latter “grace” he calls “convincing grace.” It might also be called saving (or prevailing) grace whereby God finally effects salvation upon the one who rightly responds. Wesley says, “These works [of repentance] are not the effective cause of his acceptance with God. Yet God expects them, and looks upon them with favour, because they are the necessary token that the profession of penitence is indeed sincere. Thus good works meet for repentance, e.g., a sincere attempt to make amends for wrongs done to one’s neighbour, are in a sense a previous condition of justification.” He goes on to say, “if we willingly neglect [repentance] we cannot reasonably expect to be justified at all” (Wesley, *Sermons*, II. 451-52). For further consideration, see Paul A. Mickey, *Essentials of Wesleyan Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980) and Steve Harper, *John Wesley’s Message for Today* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983).

posited a synthesis between Calvinism and Arminianism by suggesting a hypothetical universalism, i.e., he disagreed with the doctrine of limited atonement (the “L” in TULIP).¹⁰ The discussion has progressed to the present day.

IV. A COMPARISON OF THE CALVINISTIC AND ARMINIAN VIEWS REGARDING THE DOCTRINE OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY

With the preceding history of the controversy briefly established, it is time to consider the details of the doctrine of Total Depravity and related doctrines which support or refute the doctrine.

A. THE CALVINISTIC VIEW

Steele and Thomas contrast Calvinism and Arminianism giving a concise, yet precise, statement of each view. Explaining the Calvinist position regarding total depravity they write:

Total Inability or Total Depravity

Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not—indeed he cannot—choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit’s assistance to bring a sinner to Christ—it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salva-

¹⁰ “A master of the literature of Calvin, Amyraut held to the main tenets of Calvinistic theology. Nevertheless he sought to revise what he judged to be the unacceptable teachings of seventeenth century scholastic Calvinism on grace and predestination and to forge a return to Calvin himself. In addition, he sought to create at the theological level a bridge with Lutherans who were offended by the pronouncements of the Synod of Dort (1618-19) regarding the intent of the atonement. In pursuit of these ends, Amyraut propounded a view of hypothetical universal predestination, whereby God was said to will the salvation of all people on the condition that they believe. Thus ideally Christ’s atonement was sufficient for all, but because of universal human depravity, in practice it was efficient only for the elect.” (B. A. Demarest, “Amyraut, Moise,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001], 42.) See also Amyraut’s works: *A Treatise Concerning Religions* (1631), *A Short Treatise on Predestination* (1634), and *Christian Ethics* (1652-60).

tion, but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation—it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.¹¹

Lorraine Boettner, a defender of Reformed Doctrine, equates total depravity as "Total Inability"¹² and quotes *The Westminster Confession of Faith* which says,

Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.¹³

Boettner follows, "What [this means] is that since the fall man rests under the curse of sin, that he is actuated by wrong principles, and that he is wholly unable to love God or to do anything meriting salvation."¹⁴ He continues:

The inability under which he labors is not an inability to exercise volitions, but an inability to be willing to exercise holy volitions. And it is this phase of it which led Luther to declare that "Free-will is an empty term, whose reality it lost. And a lost liberty, according to my grammar, is no liberty at all."¹⁵

Thus, Calvinists¹⁶ assert the following: First, fallen man has no ability to believe. Man is not unable to exercise volition, but he is unable to be willing to exercise his volition (which amounts to the same thing, or at

¹¹ David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, *Romans: An Interpretive Outline* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1963), 144.

¹² Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1977), 61.

¹³ *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646), IX, 3.

¹⁴ Boettner, 61.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 62, quoting Martin Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, 125. It is interesting that Luther also said, addressing Erasmus, "Free-will is a downright lie; and that like the woman in the gospel, the more it is taken in hand by physicians, the worse it is made." Martin Luther, *Bondage of the Will* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 17.

¹⁶ The term *Calvinist* in this article is used to denote the Five-point Calvinist, someone who sees all five points as being mutually inclusive and logical. Of course, many feel the need to refer to themselves as Calvinists, but choose to differ with one point or another, and usually like to call themselves Moderate Calvinists.

least gives the same result). Second, he cannot receive communication from God because he is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God. Third, his will is in bondage and can do only evil in the spiritual realm. Since belief is a good thing, man can't believe unto salvation. Fourth, the Holy Spirit must, if the man is to be saved, effectively regenerate him before he can believe, so that he can believe. That is, regeneration must precede faith. Therefore, fifth, God must give faith to such a previously fallen, but regenerated, man. In the standard Calvinist position faith in Christ is not the means through which one is regenerated (given new life, made alive again), but rather an ensuing result of the imposition of new life on the unwilling sinner. Faith becomes a manifestation of regeneration, not the channel through which one receives eternal life. This seems inconsistent biblically since faith in Christ alone is set forth as the only condition for receiving eternal life.

Now, compare the above implications of total depravity with that of Ryrie: "Positively, total depravity means (1) that corruption extends to every part of man's nature, including all the faculties of his being; and (2) that there is nothing in man that can commend him to a righteous God."¹⁷ We might ask if it is necessary to understand total depravity as the lack of ability to believe or just the lack of ability to do something so worthy that it merits favor with God and obligates Him to accept us on the basis of that work, whatever it may be. It is suggested that the extreme Calvinist position is logically invalid internally and contradictory externally as it relates to the requirement to believe as the only means through which one might receive eternal life as a gift. Faith is biblically, the *means* through which regeneration is effected by the Spirit, not the ensuing *result*. It would seem that we are not called on to be regenerated in order to believe, but we are obliged to believe as a condition of receiving eternal life.

B. THE ARMINIAN VIEW

Steele and Thomas record the Arminian view in contrast:

Free Will or Human Ability

Although human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but

¹⁷ Charles C. Ryrie, "Depravity, Total," in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Everett Harrison (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), 164.

does so in such a manner as not to interfere with man's freedom. Each sinner possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power to either cooperate with God's Spirit and be regenerated or resist God's grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the Spirit's assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe, for faith is man's act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinner's gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation.¹⁸

It would seem that even the Remonstrants assert that man is unable to believe or to freely choose God "of and by himself" and carry the need for some form of assisting grace both backward (preceding belief unto salvation) as a preparatory circumstance to belief and forward (subsequent to belief unto salvation) as a means of doing good after one becomes a Christian.

Note first, man's will is not enslaved or bound by the sinful nature. Second, God enables repentance and belief. Third, both repentance and faith are conditions for regeneration, rather than faith alone. Fourth, man has free will (freedom, liberty, and ability to believe). Fifth, in the current Arminian view,¹⁹ man is not spiritually helpless, but able and under

¹⁸ Steele and Thomas, 144.

¹⁹ Contrast the third and fourth of the *Five Arminian Articles* which seems not to go as far as the current expression of Arminianism: "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 any thing that is truly good (such as saving Faith eminently is); but that 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 all good, even to this extent, that the regenerate man, himself, without prevention 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 God in Christ..." From Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes*, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966), 545-47. This seems to assert that man has no free will to believe and needs assisting grace in order to begin,

the obligation to respond to God. Sixth, the sinner must “cooperate” or take an active role in the regeneration experience, and thus is responsible to do so or suffer eternal consequences. Seventh, faith is man’s “act,” his gift or contribution to God or a contribution toward his salvation, which precedes the new birth. Note the internal contradiction in this summary: Man is not helpless, yet needs God’s enabling grace; he is enslaved to a sinful nature, yet has freedom of will. It seems that the Arminian view is an attempt to have it both ways.

By comparing these two major theological views in their extreme it is clear that there are contradictions both within the systems and between the systems. Is man free or isn’t he? Can he hear God or is he so dead in his sins that he cannot even understand the gospel? Why take the time to explain the gospel to someone if they are unable to receive it, believe it, or even understand it in a spiritual way? Is faith the part of salvation that man contributes, or is it given to him by God, like a commodity? Is man regenerated so that he can believe or does he believe and receive subsequent regeneration? Is it really fair or good of God to provide salvation for someone who has no ability to attain it because he can’t appropriate the remedy? In order to supply an answer to these and other questions, one must understand the biblical basis for the doctrine of total depravity. What does the Bible teach about man’s sinfulness or his ability versus non-ability?

V. THE IMPUTATION OF SIN

At this stage one might ask, “What, then, is the basis for the doctrine of total depravity, where does it come from, and what does it mean? The question of total depravity arises from the biblical teaching regarding the

continue, and finally accomplish salvation in its fullest sense. This is similar to Boettner’s statement, cited above, indicating that man’s inability is that of his willingness, not his ability *per se*. Robert L. Dabney comments, “The five points handed in by the Arminians to the States General of Holland, in their celebrated Remonstrance, were so covertly worded as scarcely to disclose their true sentiments. The Assertions concerning original Sin and Free will, were seemingly such as Calvinists could accept. The doctrine of common grace was but obscurely hinted; and the perseverance of Saints was only doubted. But their system soon developed itself into semi-Pelagianism” (*Lectures in Systematic Theology*, 580).

consequences of Adam's sin upon him and, consequently, upon his descendants.

Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen 2:15-16).

With Adam's disobedience came the fulfillment of God's promise of death. But how did this affect his posterity? The answer to this comes by considering the imputation of sin.

The Bible asserts that beginning with the fall of Adam, our original forefather, his descendants are not only guilty of the sins which they personally and individually commit, but also that they are constituted sinners by their very nature and carry the guilt and, therefore, the consequences of Adam's sin. The primary passage which supports this is Rom 5:12, "Therefore, just as through one man [*dia henos anthrōpou*] sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." Also, 1 Cor 15:22 says, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive." Compare Eph 2:1-3:

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the *sons of disobedience*. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were *by nature children of wrath, even as the rest* (emphasis added).

So, how are we to understand these verses and what conclusions are we to draw from them? Are individuals rendered guilty because Adam failed in his obedience to God? If not, one might ask why the cosmos is under the curse of death and why we are "by nature" children of wrath. If death resulted as a consequence of Adam's sin, and we "naturally" participate in that death, are we not also guilty of that sin? If we are not guilty of Adam's sin, is it then not unjust for God to impose physical death upon us? And would it not be correspondingly unjust for Him to punish us with spiritual or eternal death? These and other questions have brought about several primary views which explain our sinful, guilty condition. Major views dealing with these issues are Pelagius' view, the

Arminian view, the Federal headship view, and the Realism or Seminalism view. They are described briefly below.

A. PELAGIUS' VIEW

Briefly, Pelagius (ca. 340–ca. 410), a Brit:

taught that God created every soul directly (he despised the traducian theory), and that every soul therefore was innocent and unstained. No created soul had any direct relation to the sin of Adam; the only significance of Adam's sin upon humanity was the bad example. Pelagius, therefore, did not view Romans 5:12 as affecting all humanity; it did not. No sin of Adam was imputed to the human race; only those acts of sin that people themselves committed were imputed to them. Moreover, man did not die because he sinned but because of the law of nature. Adam would have died even if he had not sinned. Pelagius and his doctrines were condemned at the Council of Carthage in A.D. 418.²⁰

Pelagius' view can be dismissed since he fails to convincingly provide an adequate understanding of Scripture relative to the sin problem.²¹

B. THE ARMINIAN VIEW

Again, this arises out of the teachings of Jacobus Arminius who taught that:

man was not considered guilty because of Adam's sin. When people would voluntarily and purposefully choose to sin even though they had power to live righteously—then, and only then, would God impute sin to them and count them guilty. Although man does not possess original righteousness because of Adam's sin, "God bestows upon each individual from the first dawn of consciousness a special influence of the Holy Spirit which is sufficient to counteract the effect of the inherited depravity and to make obedience possible, provided the human will cooperates, which it has the power to do." Thus Arminius recognized an effect from Adam's sin but not in the sense of total depravity; through divine enablement man could still make righteous choices. Romans 5:12 is not understood as all humanity suffering the effect of Adam's sin and death; but

²⁰ Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, 311.

²¹ For a contemporary argument against Pelagius see Augustine, *Against Pelagius*. Generally Pelagius' teaching is followed by Unitarians and Socinians.

rather because of the individual agreement with Adam's act is sin imputed to the individual.²²

So, in the Arminian view, there is no imputation of *Adam's* sin. Guilt is assigned when a person commits his own sin. Again, like Pelagianism, this seems to ignore the teaching of the biblical text.

C. THE FEDERAL HEADSHIP VIEW

It asserts that the role of Adam, who was indeed the natural head of the human race, was also the legal representative head of the total (federated) human race and, as such, brought condemnation on his race by virtue of his covenant (of works) relationship with God.²³ Enns explains this "covenant of works" concept:

Covenant Theology involves two primary features, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. The covenant of works, although not mentioned specifically in the Old Testament is implied. According to covenant theologians, God entered into a covenant with Adam prior to the Fall. In this covenant He promised eternal life for obedience during a probationary period and death if Adam disobeyed. In the test Adam stood as the federal head of all humanity; had he obeyed, he would have been confirmed in righteousness with the benefits passing to all humanity. Conversely, because he failed and fell, Adam's act of disobedience was transmitted to all humanity—all are born in sin and under sin's authority.²⁴

Collins says that Federal Theology:

²² Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, 312.

²³ This view was popularized by Johannes Cocceius (Johann Koch, 1603-1669), *Doctrine of the Covenant and Testaments of God* (1648) and *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (1655); Charles Hodge (1797-1878), *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), 2:197 ff.; J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1962), I: 307-12; James P. Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Pompano Beach, FL: N. Pompano Baptist Church, 1887), 253; and Louis Berkhoff, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941), 219-58, *Manual of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1933), 143-50; John Murray, *Imputation of Adam's Sin* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959).

²⁴ Enns, 461-62.

finds clear expression in I Cor. 15 and Rom. 5. “As in Adam all die,” writes Paul, “even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (I Cor. 15:22). Adam, as the first man, was the natural head of the race, and represented all mankind as the human party to the covenant of works into which God entered with him. As the natural head, he stood in a federal (*foedus*, Latin “covenant”) relationship to all posterity. His obedience, had it been maintained, would have transmitted an entail of blessedness to them; his disobedience involved them with him in the curse which God pronounced upon the transgressors of his law.²⁵

From these descriptions it is clear that unlike the Pelagian and Arminian view, the transmission of sin and guilt from Adam to the human race is certain. The federal headship view, therefore, asserts an *immediate imputation* of Adam’s sin and guilt *directly* from Adam to each of his descendants without consideration of the physical inheritance of other corruption, or hereditary depravity. Hodge says, “in view of the union, federal and natural, between Adam and his posterity, his sin, although not their act, is so imputed to them that it is the judicial ground of the penalty threatened against him coming also upon them. This is the doctrine of immediate imputation.”²⁶ “What Adam did is charged to his posterity.”²⁷

D. THE REALISM OR SEMINALISM VIEW (ALSO CALLED THE AUGUSTINIAN VIEW)²⁸

This view encompasses some concepts of the Federal headship view and, therefore, is somewhat similar to it, but goes beyond the supposed “covenant of works” in which Adam was to act as humanity’s represen-

²⁵ G. N. M. Collins, “Federal Theology,” in *Evangelical Dictionary*, 413.

²⁶ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1940), II:192-93. By “immediate” Hodge means that there are no “mediators” or go-betweens from Adam to each individual. Guilt is imputed directly to each soul.

²⁷ H. Wayne House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine*, Chart 50 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 86.

²⁸ This view was held by Augustine of Hippo, John Calvin, and Martin Luther. William G.T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1888-94), 2:29-32, 41-44, 181-92; Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1907), 465-76; and Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1998), 639.

tative, which covenant is not expressed in the Bible. It provides a biblical and a biological rationale for the imputation.

The theory of realism teaches that all human nature existed in Adam prior to his transgression. When he sinned, therefore, the common human nature that was in him fell too. Thus, Adam's act of disobedience was quite literally the disobedience of all humanity. Consequently, every human being who enters this world—being an individualization of the common nature fallen in Adam—is guilty of, and punishable for, Adam's sin. That sin someone has said, "is ours, not because it is imputed to us; but it is imputed to us, because it is truly and properly ours."²⁹

Thus, "Tertullian's dictum became famous: *Tradux animae, tradux pessati*, 'the propagation of the soul implies the propagation of sin.'"³⁰

E. SUMMARY

Traducianism, the view of the biological transmission of the material and immaterial part of man from Adam to each person conceived, coincides with the doctrine of Realism or Seminalism which view holds that the human race was really in Adam when he sinned, participated in the sin, and incurred the *just* penalty of judicial condemnation upon the human race. It would seem that "like begets like" and that 1) God's image, 2) human nature (the immaterial human soul/spirit), and 3) the human body (the physical or genetic makeup of each person) is passed on from father to child (cf. Gen 5:1, 3; 9:6). Adam has had a self-propagating offspring, and there seems to be no need to chaff at the idea that we inherit either corruption or guilt seminally. We come with it. Federalism stresses the representative nature of Adam's headship and transgression, and understands a parallel between what Adam did and the representative role of Christ (Rom 5:12-21). A seminal relationship in Adam answers *how* and *why* "all die in Adam" (1 Cor 15:22) and how death would *naturally* spread to all men, since the entire essence of human nature (i.e., the potential human race) *must* have been in Adam at the time he sinned (Where else could the entirety of humanity have been?) and at which time he and we (by virtue of our essential presence in him) be-

²⁹ David C. Smith, *With Willful Intent: A Theology of Sin* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books/SP Publications, 1994), 360, quoting Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2:216.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

came actually guilty of the transgression. The biblical teaching that we are “by nature the children of wrath” is easily understood if we inherit both body and human nature (essence, spirit, soul, the immaterial part of our being) from Adam. We are as guilty as Adam. All of humanity is simply “Adam-in-extension.” Since we have a direct relationship with Adam, (having been spiritually and physically in him while in the garden, transgressing against God, receiving the guilty verdict, and receiving the death penalty), his sin is ours and his guilt is directly (or immediately) placed to our account at the time of our historical individualization at conception. And since we have this biological tie to Adam who was the entirety of humanity when he/we sinned, we receive, at the time of our historical individualization at conception, not only the transmission of the likeness of both God and Adam, but also, the corruption of the fallen nature.³¹ It would, therefore seem that a correct view could be a combination of the Federal and Seminal view as long as one understands that Adam was not *just* our representative, but was also the *location* of our existence and the one from whom our life and essential nature has derived.³²

VI. FAITH AND REGENERATION

Confusion of the highest order arises in theological discussions and writings when discussing how faith or belief relates to the regeneration of the sinner. If faith in Christ is unconsciously categorized as an act of the human will, then it conflicts with the scriptural teaching that “we were born, not from blood *nor from the will of flesh nor from the will of man*, but from God” (John 1:12, emphasis added). The Arminian would argue that the exertion of the will in believing is something a sinner *can do* only with God’s assisting grace. But if that were the correct manner of expressing things, it would follow that man’s *will* to believe *does* have at least some part to play in the scheme of things, and this seems contradictory to Scripture as a requisite for regeneration. On the other hand, the

³¹ It would seem better to refer to this as the “corrupt human nature” rather than the “sin nature” so often referred to in theological books and discussions.

³² This writer prefers the Realism or Seminalism view to the Federal headship view simply because the biblical references to being in Adam and the spread of sin to all men, combined with a normal understanding of physical reproduction, seems to be a more solid basis than an inferred “covenant of works” between Adam and God which is not recorded in Scripture.

Calvinist would argue that faith is a *gift* from God, not a contributing act of the human will at all. God's "gift of faith" goes only to the elect. He gives faith only to those He regenerates (regeneration precedes faith), and a sinner contributes nothing to his regeneration in any way, not even the use of his will. If he were to *do* anything of merit (and exercising the will to believe would be an action of the human will) this would imply at least some obligation on God's part since He could not turn a blind eye to the merits of the action. So, according to the Calvinistic view, believing is also an *act* of the will, but cannot precede regeneration so as to make it meritorious. Either Arminian or Calvinist views may seem valid except that belief or faith is what man *does* as a condition for receiving eternal life. Herein lies the confusion. It is a problem coming from within our language structure because we speak of what we *do* as though each time we do something it is an action, a decision, or a deed. If I am told that I must believe in Jesus, I understand that this is something I ought to *do*. But how do I *do* it? What *action* is it that I take? Do I "do it" by confessing, professing, being baptized, repenting of known sins, performing acts of penance, or promising God to be good from now on?

Two considerations might be made here. The first question is: Is the unregenerate sinner able to believe? The second is: If the unregenerate sinner is indeed able to believe, how is it that his belief is not considered to be a meritorious act, and therefore automatically canceled? We will consider these in order.

A. IS THE UNREGENERATE SINNER ABLE TO BELIEVE?

The Arminian says, "Yes, but only with God's help." The Calvinist says, "No, since regeneration precedes faith which is a gift."³³ Norman L. Geisler frames the matter this way:

The famous French existentialist Jean Paul Sartre argued: If God exists then the future is determined and I am not free; I am free; therefore, God does not exist. In contrast, the great Puritan theologian Jonathan Edwards argued: If every event has a cause, then so do free human choices; God is the First Cause of everything; therefore, God must be the cause of our free choices. Sartre used freedom to eliminate God, and Edwards seemed to use God to eliminate freedom. Since the bib-

³³ For an excellent debate on the various views on the subject, see *Predestination & Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty & Human Freedom*, eds. David Basinger & Randall Basinger (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986).

lical Christian grants both God's sovereignty and human responsibility for free choice, there remains the problem as to how to reconcile them.³⁴

The question here is: Is the doctrine of total depravity correctly understood to exclude human freedom in regard to the ability to believe the gospel in order to obtain eternal life? The answer is no. If we have the ability to believe some things, why is it that we are thought to be unable to believe the propositions of the gospel and be accepted by God on that basis? Most admit that God holds the sinner accountable for the guilt of sin, as discussed above, but why would God offer salvation to all through the gospel when He knows that the hearer is unable to believe? Would that not be the grandest hoax of all, a deception that would prove God to be an unjust, sadistic monster on a cosmic scale?

The question of whether man is free to act or believe is excellently argued by Geisler in his article "Freedom, Free Will, and Determinism" in which he says,

There are three basic positions concerning man's choices: determinism, indeterminism, and self-determinism...Determinism is the belief that all of man's actions are the result of antecedent factors or causes...Theistic determinists, such as Martin Luther and Jonathan Edwards, trace man's actions back to God's controlling hand. The opposite position to determinism is indeterminism. On this view there are no causes for man's actions, antecedent or otherwise. The final position is self-determinism, or free will. This is the belief that man determines his own behavior freely, and that no causal antecedents can sufficiently account for his actions.³⁵

As an analogy, *determinism* could be compared to a parent force-feeding an infant, so God also forces His will on man in accord with His designs. *Indeterminism* would be like denying that people eat because they are hungry. Eating would be a random event at best. True, we often

³⁴ Norman Geisler, "God Knows All Things," in *Predestination & Free Will*, 63, referring to Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), pt. 4, Chap. 1, and to Jonathan Edwards, "Freedom of the Will," in *Jonathan Edwards*, eds. Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962), 305.

³⁵ Norman L. Geisler, "Freedom, Free Will, and Determinism," in *Evangelical Dictionary*, 428.

eat when not hungry, but there is still a reason to do so (to socialize with others, to enjoy the taste, etc.). *Self-determinism* might be likened to a person acting on what he perceives to be good or desirable, to obtain pleasure, or to avoid pain. We can actually decide whether to eat junk food or a balanced meal apart from any externally compelled duress!

In his explanation Geisler deals with both determinism and indeterminism, showing objections to each and concludes that “some form of self-determinism is the most compatible with the biblical view of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility.” He points out that self-determinists “accept the fact that such factors as heredity and environment often influence one’s behavior,” but also suggests that such factors are not the *cause* of one’s behavior. He answers the question of what causes the will to act.

[I]t is not the will of a person that makes a decision but the *person* acting by means of his will. And since the *person* is the first cause of his acts, it is meaningless to ask what the cause of the first cause is. Just as no outside force caused God to create the world, so no outside force causes *people* to choose certain actions. For man is created in God’s image, which includes the possession of free will.³⁶

The *person* acts, not the will. Self-determinism therefore seems correct and, to the extent that belief is an act, decision, or self-determination, it would seem to apply to the present topic. It would certainly apply to a believer’s decision to live for Christ and His cause, to obey Him on a daily basis, to find His will in the study of the Scriptures, to be baptized, to participate in the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, and to witness of His grace to others. But it would also apply to unbelievers when they decide or act in any manner, consistent or not, with God’s justice. Unbelievers can do good, kind things as well as bad things. So can Christians. Does God *make* us do the good? Does He *make* us do the bad? Why one and not the other? Obviously God does not make us do anything. We are responsible. If self-determination is relinquished, we are then only puppets of God or some other force or we are clouds floating in the chaotic atmosphere of fate.

We may conclude that man, who has been made in God’s image, can act freely in accord with his nature, even in his fallen state. Our fallen human nature has residuals of the image of God and is also inclined

³⁶ Ibid., 430 (emphasis added).

away from Him. This doesn't mean that we cannot do right things, nor does it mean that we cannot believe His message. To argue 1) that unregenerate man lacks the ability to meaningfully hear the propositions of the gospel message and 2) to insist that he cannot understand the implications and consequences of unbelief, is to render useless any and every gospel message to the sinner. To say that the sinner, even though he hears the message of eternal life is innately unable or unwilling to believe in Christ is to deny that unregenerate man has a sense of self-preservation. But self-preservation seems to be a given among mankind as well as lower forms of animal life. The point is that if a person is able to understand propositional gospel assertions and to respond in such a way that preserves his life by believing, there would be no practical reason to evangelize the lost. Geisler says,

...the only difference between [the extreme and moderate Calvinist] is that moderates insist that being "dead" in sin does not mean that unsaved people cannot understand and receive the truth of the gospel as the Spirit of God works on their hearts. That is, it does not *erase* the image of God (but only *effaces* it).³⁷

Total depravity, therefore, speaks of the legal guilt and the inherited corruption of the persons who descended from Adam and became individualized at their conception. The doctrine should not rule out the possibility of a person acting rightly or responding in belief. Believing may be categorized as an act by some, but there may be a better way to view belief than understanding faith to be an act of the will.

B. IS BELIEF/FAITH IN CHRIST ALONE A DISQUALIFYING ACT?

The question that arises at this point is: If I am indeed able to believe, how is it that faith is not considered a meritorious act, and therefore automatically canceled? In order to answer this it is necessary to

³⁷ Norman L. Geisler, *Chosen But Free: A Balanced View of Divine Election* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2001), 120. He categorizes Extreme Calvinism as holding to "Intensive" total depravity which essentially destroys the image of God in the unsaved person and Moderate Calvinism (a category in which he places himself) as holding to "Extensive" total depravity, meaning that man is naturally corrupted. He says, "Some extreme Calvinists deny that they believe the image of God is 'destroyed' in fallen humans—at least formally. But *logically* this is what their view demands and practically this is what they hold," (note 1, emphasis in original).

define faith and to ask if faith is an act at all! Evangelicalism has asserted without challenge that the sinner must make a decision for Christ. This might be called “decisionism” and decisionism blurs the message of the gospel. It calls on a person to *do* something. What? Believe, of course! But how do you do that, and how is anyone else going to know if you did it? Must one walk the aisle, confess with the mouth, be baptized, regularly attend church, or do other appropriate things? Doing something rather than believing something confuses the whole issue.

It is reported that Lewis Sperry Chafer would tell the men in his classes during the early days of Dallas Theological Seminary, “Men, don’t give them something to do, give them something to believe!” He knew that the *message of the gospel*, not the decision (will) of men, was the key. Here is our failure. Evangelicals have confused doing something with believing the historical event of Christ’s crucifixion and the promises of God as they relate to the one who trusts Christ alone for eternal life. We have made belief a deed to be done, a decision to be made, and a follow-through to be accomplished. Since when does belief include action?³⁸ How is it perceived that faith includes works? Dillow asks rhetorically, “If faith is the opposite of works of obedience (law) and is the opposite of work, by what mental alchemy can men seriously argue that, while faith is apart from works of obedience, faith itself includes works of obedience?”³⁹ Surely, action may result from belief, but that action would be necessarily subsequent. The problem within Evangelicalism is that while we have asserted that man is 1) unable to believe (or is, at

³⁸ This writer realizes that there are biblical passages where one might imply that belief is a deed. For instance, the Philippian jailer asked, “What must I do to be saved?” and this is often taken, from a present day evangelistic perspective as referring to obtaining eternal life rather than the physical destruction that might have come upon the jailer and his family for allowing prisoners to escape. Or, it may have been a question about obtaining eternal life which was stated the only way he knew to ask the question. But believing was not doing something, it was simply an acceptance of the truth of Paul’s prior words and testimony about Christ. Jesus answered a question of disciples, “What shall we do that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent” (John 6:29). Jesus may have been saying, either that their continued work was to believe in Him or that their belief was a product of God’s work in them.

³⁹ Joseph Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1992), 273.

least, impaired) and 2) unable to do anything to meritoriously earn eternal life, we seem to need an alternative. The only alternative to simple faith in Christ alone is to insist that the sinner do something (decide, confess, repent, etc.), and this is the very thing that the gospel message categorically excludes (cf. Rom 4:2-5; 11:6). In other words, for lack of a viable alternative we have mingled faith and works together even though the Bible excludes one from the other in the realm of the gospel offer because, it seems, we are not astute enough to see the glaring contradiction.

When defining faith, the dictionary gives us little help because dictionaries traditionally define a word as to its common use. For instance, one definition given for faith is “to urge, be convinced” and then it defines it as both, “1. Unquestioning belief that does not require proof or evidence...5. Complete trust, confidence, or reliance.”⁴⁰ What if one believes something that does require evidence to believe? How is one to believe, for instance, that today is Sunday without an awareness that it is so according to the calendar (the evidence). Since the dictionary has several disparate definitions of faith, perhaps we should define what faith really is and then refine it to show what “saving faith” really is. Robert N. Wilkin says simply that, “Faith is the conviction that something is true.”⁴¹ There is nothing in this definition that is opposed to belief being based upon evidence. On the contrary, he explains that faith *does* depend upon evidence, whether it be verbal testimony (like a teacher’s claim that Washington was the first president of the United States or Sarah’s belief in God’s promise that she would bear a child) or other more concrete forms (like verbal or physical evidence provided to a jury). In either case, one’s belief is due to the evidence offered. When one is convinced that the evidence is true, authentic, and reliable, he believes the ramifications of the evidence immediately. The crux is the perceived truth of the evidence.

But what is “saving faith”? As Wilkin suggests, faith in Christ may be defined as “the conviction that He is the Guarantor of eternal life for every believer.”⁴² While discussing “saving faith” at this location, Wilkin cites John 11:25-27. Jesus asks Martha, “Do you believe this?” (John

⁴⁰ *Websters New World Dictionary*, s.v. “Faith,” 503.

⁴¹ Robert N. Wilkin, *Confident in Christ: Living by Faith Really Works* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), 5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 7.

11:26) as the only condition for eternal life. We note that Jesus did not ask, “Will you *decide* to believe this?” or even “*Will* you believe this?” He simply asked her if she did believe (i.e., was convinced) that the words and promise which He had just spoken were true.

So the question as to whether faith itself is a meritorious deed expresses a misunderstanding about the nature and definition of faith. Faith is not a deed at all. So, it cannot be a meritorious deed. It is not a decision, but a realization that the message or promise of eternal life is true. It is what happens when we are convinced of the truth. It takes no decision and no action of the will at all. It is not a deed.

“Faith is the act of assent by which the gospel is appropriated.”⁴³ An appropriation can be illustrated by the following. Let’s suppose you have fallen down into an old, deep well casing. When you regain consciousness you find yourself upside down, in pain with broken bones, and desperately frightened. You begin to call out for help. You yell with all your might and finally someone comes along and hears your cry. They throw down a grapevine and try to pull you out. You happily put the grapevine under your arms. They pull, but the vine breaks. They give up and go away. More people come along, see your plight, and throw down some food saying that they can do nothing else but try to alleviate your misery. They depart as well. Finally you hear a voice that says he’s from the local fire department search and rescue team. He says he’ll pull you out and sends down a narrow, strong metal cable telling you to put the straps under your arms. Gladly you comply and wait.⁴⁴

At this point we must stop and ask what you have do to get out of the hole. Did putting the grapevine around your body do you any good? At this point, has the cable lifted you one inch? Is putting the straps on going to do you any good at all? The only thing that will carry you to safety is the power of the fireman above and the strength of the cable. You cannot do it yourself. If the fireman isn’t trustworthy or if the cable breaks, you’ll still never get out. But on the basis of his promise to save you, your compliance in putting the straps under your arms was simply an appropriation of the means of the deliverance offered. You have not

⁴³ William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, 1985), 11.

⁴⁴ I realize that putting on straps, in the illustration, is an action, but remember that it’s only a physical illustration. Appropriation is what is being illustrated here.

saved yourself in any way, you've only made salvation possible. You saw your need, called on a higher, stronger power, and complied with the one condition required. You were weak, helpless, and injured, but not dead. The fireman didn't put the straps on you or coerce you to do it, but you gladly did it of your own free will because you were convinced of the truth and the veracity of the fireman. You believed him. Now, the fireman didn't cause you to fall. When you became conscious of your need you called out for help. You were able to hear the directions of the fireman and you understood them. You complied with the one and only condition for deliverance and were lifted up. You were saved by grace (i.e., you did not earn your way out by doing something and you did not vow to give a yearly contribution to the fire department. That wasn't the issue at the moment). You were not saved *because* of what you did (put on the straps) nor what you would do in the future (be very thankful and probably contribute to the fire department), but by means of appropriating the straps. You could never legitimately claim credit for your own escape by saying, "If it weren't for my heroic action in putting the straps under my arms the fireman would never have gotten me out!" The fireman got you out because that's what he does. He didn't make you attach the straps though. You did so of your own accord, knowing that it was the best deal in town.

VII. THE PROPOSED BIBLICAL VIEW OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY

We have presented a brief history of the Calvinist and Arminian controversy, reviewed the basic differences between them regarding the doctrine of total depravity identified by the T in the TULIP acrostic, and considered the related doctrines: 1) the imputation of sin (Pelagius theory, the Arminian theory, the Federal headship theory held by Covenant Theology, and the view of a real, seminal presence of every individual in Adam when he sinned and 2) the question of man's ability to believe in light of the doctrine of Total Depravity and whether or not faith is a meritorious act.

While the discussion of the guilt of original sin and inherited corruption will continue to be evaluated, it seems natural, logical, and biblical to assert that man is totally depraved. This means that each and every human with a seminal relationship to Adam, is 1) guilty as an immediate consequence of being in Adam when he sinned and 2) corrupt by an inherited fallen nature with an inclination to fall short of the standards of God's righteous character. *Because* the human race was in Adam, Man-

kind is not only guilty of sin and worthy of the penalty of death, but is also, *because* of innate corruption, unable to do anything that would merit God's favor, forgiveness, or acquittal from the death penalty. Therefore, God is neither the author of sin by the creation of each soul at conception nor can it be said that God arbitrarily (i.e., without valid reason) imposes the judicial guilt of Adam upon each one of his descendants by virtue of an inferred covenant of works (as supposed by the Federal Headship View). The Traducian view of the transmission of the corrupt human nature through one's father combined with the Realist or Seminal View of our presence in Adam conforms with Scripture as well as with biology. Traducianism and Seminal Realism do not create the problems that the Federal Headship view does. Schaff speaks of the need of salvation:

It arises from the fall of Adam and the whole human race, which was included in him as the tree is included in the seed, so that his one act of disobedience brought sin and death upon the whole posterity. Paul proves the depravity of Gentiles and Jews without exception to the extent that they are absolutely unable to attain to righteousness and to save themselves. "There is none righteous, no, not one." They are all under the dominion of sin and under the sentence of condemnation.⁴⁵

Total depravity, therefore, speaks both of inherited corruption of our nature seminally through our individual fathers, leading to personal sins, and also of the imputed guilt of sin because the entirety of the human race was in Adam sinning. The result is total depravity which may be seen as a separation from the joys of God's presence, a non-appreciation of His virtues, and an inclination to fall short of His character in our actions. The lostness of the human race, however, does not mean that man acts as badly as he is capable of, that he cannot think logically, that he cannot hear and understand the propositions of the gospel, or that he is unable to believe the truth. Man is rightly considered to be dead in sin, and by nature the child of wrath, but he still retains the image of God in his being. That image seems to carry with it an ability to believe the gospel (appropriate God's grace channeled through the message of the cross) and, by faith alone, obtain eternal life. While man is unwilling to come to God and/or earn His favor (Jer 17:9-10), he can approach Him by faith

⁴⁵ Phillip Schaff, *The History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: A.P. & A., n.d.), 244.

(which is not meritorious, but the existence of which admits that there is indeed nothing that man can do to earn His favor). Since man can do that which is according to his nature, and since his nature carries with it an innate ability for self preservation and a desire for same, it follows that man may consider the claims of the gospel and believe the message. Such would be consistent with the desire for self preservation. One may not reasonably argue that since man is inclined to do nothing to glorify God in his fallen state, but act only in a selfish way, his motive to believe is insufficient to attain God's approval. Man is not saved by his good motives, desire to glorify God, or any other meritorious deed. He is saved when he comprehends the consequences of his desperate fallen condition and, perhaps even selfishly and fearfully, believes in Christ alone as his only hope of eternal life. Believing in this way could by no stretch of imagination be considered meritorious. If anything, it is seen as just the opposite. It is in this context that God's grace shines for His glory.