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“One could hardly wish for a better study resource to show the five points’ faithfulness to Scripture. The fullness of the bibliographies gives this book special value. In days like ours, when fuzzy theology flourishes, this disciplined display of the heart of the gospel calls for three of the loudest cheers we can give.”

—J. I. Packer

“I was first introduced to this splendid guidebook as a teenager. Now, almost four decades later, it is a privilege to commend this enlarged and revised edition to a new generation. It is a model of clarity, full of biblical teaching, and will help you through the vast maze of Christian books to some of the very best.”

—Sinclair B. Ferguson

“Next to the doctrine of salvation, the sovereignty of God has, to me, been the most powerfully comforting truth from the Word of God. To understand God’s hand in my hardship as a quadriplegic has dissipated the darkness of despair and hopelessness. My thanks to P&R Publishing for issuing a new edition of this excellent book.” —Joni Eareckson Tada

“An invaluable resource to students of Reformed theology for forty years. This new and expanded edition should prove even more helpful to anyone wishing to understand or teach the biblical basis of the doctrines of grace. The appendices are much more than additional, interesting information. They serve to deepen one’s understanding of what true Calvinism is all about.”

—Jerry Bridges

“A classic exposition and defense of Reformed theology. This new and improved edition will be treasured by anyone who believes that in Christ, God saves sinners who cannot and will not save themselves. The authors clearly prove the sovereignty

of God's grace from the Scriptures and show how this leads to a life in godliness. Simply put, *The Five Points of Calvinism* is the best and the most complete short introduction to the doctrines of grace." —Philip G. Ryken

"I am delighted to see this masterpiece in its new, revised edition, as its original version had a formative influence on my own thinking and ministry. Now, in its updated and enlarged form, it is even better. For anyone seeking to understand, teach, and enjoy the doctrines of grace, this book is quite simply a 'must.'" —John Blanchard

"I've always liked its concise and uncluttered presentation, its down-to-earth explanation, its usable collection of Bible passages and recommended titles, and that excellent supplemental article on foreknowledge. There is no telling how many times I have given copies away or recommended its use to others. But now, without losing any of its essential character, it's even better!" —Jim Eliff

"A powerful reaffirmation of the 'heart and soul' of classic Calvinism. The authors' scholarship is extensive, they never fudge an issue, and they carry their readers along in an in-offensive way to their conclusions. A superb depiction of Calvinistic soteriology, this edition will continue to be a valuable aid in the spread of biblical Christianity." —Robert L. Reymond

"We are excited about this revised and expanded edition. I have personally seen our sovereign God at work in a gracious way in the life and ministry of my friend Curtis Thomas. I pray that this new edition will be widely used to bring glory to the God of our salvation." —Robert C. (Ric) Cannada Jr.

"A standby for many years, *The Five Points of Calvinism* has been enlarged and revised—a fact that only makes it even more valuable." —Jay E. Adams

THE  
FIVE  
POINTS OF  
CALVINISM



THE  
FIVE  
POINTS OF  
CALVINISM

DEFINED, DEFENDED, AND DOCUMENTED

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SECOND EDITION

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DAVID N. STEELE  
CURTIS C. THOMAS  
S. LANCE QUINN

  
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*It is with deep gratitude that we  
dedicate this book to the memory of*

*Dr. Loraine Boettner*

*in appreciation of his writing  
ministry, kind encouragement, and  
sacrificial Christian example.*



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## FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to commend this new edition of *The Five Points of Calvinism*, as I did the first edition. For forty years, I made frequent use of the original edition, and I found it both accurate and convenient. It offered a clear and concise definition of the Calvinistic position, provided a conspectus of the biblical foundation for each point, and gave a brief review of the literature available in English on the whole subject and on each point. I wrote at the time, “To get this in compact form at a readily accessible price is certainly a most desirable project. Far from duplicating existing materials, this present work may be viewed as filling an unfortunate lacuna.”

In this new edition, the qualities of the earlier one have been carefully maintained. The biblical support for each point not only records the reference, but actually gives the written text of the relevant passage. The bibliography, while useful in the first edition, has been greatly developed and updated with a listing of 328 sources, as compared with 104 in the earlier edition. Only three ancient works that are difficult to secure and nineteen pamphlets of lesser importance have been deleted, and some 246 titles have been added.

In addition to the previous appendix on “The Meaning of ‘Foreknew’ in Romans 8:29,” the new edition contains seven new appendices, the longest one detailing some of the historical vicissitudes of the struggle between Calvinism and Arminianism, by whatever name they may have been known. The last two examples of this struggle relate to recent controversies of

a somewhat different nature within the evangelical community, the last one actually relating to the defense of God's exhaustive foreknowledge that embraces even the future decisions of moral agents.

In the foreword to the first edition, I responded to the objection that the five points of Calvinism are an artificial division by saying:

To be sure, this structure has its historical origin . . . in the necessity to counter the objections of the Remonstrance (1610), which were formulated along five main heads of doctrine. Nevertheless, and in part, on account of these historical moorings, the five points provide a classic framework, which is quite well adapted for the expression of certain distinguishing emphases of Calvinism. Furthermore, they are well suited for the exhibition of the inner correlation between Calvinistic tenets, since each of them may well be viewed as an aspect of the sovereign grace of God.

I would like in this new foreword to say a word about the nomenclature of the five points. Ever since the appearance of Loraine Boettner's magisterial *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, it has been customary to refer to the five points according to the acrostic TULIP:

1. **T**otal Depravity
2. **U**nconditional Election
3. **L**imited Atonement
4. **I**rresistible Grace
5. **P**erseverance of the Saints

This has been convenient and to a large extent appropriate. Each of the terms, however, may lead to some misapprehension that needs to be corrected. Therefore, I have suggested

some alternative language that, in my judgment, specifies more accurately the issues in view. It is as follows:

1. Radical and Pervasive Depravity
2. Sovereign, Divine Election
3. Definite Atonement (or Particular Redemption)
4. Effectual, Saving Grace
5. Perseverance of God with the Saints

This does not constitute an acrostic. If one be required, I would propose the following one, which emphasizes that all five points are really an articulation of the doctrine of grace:

**GRACE** is:

1. **O**bligatory (that is, indispensable)
2. **S**overeign (in choice)
3. **P**articular (in redemption)
4. **E**ffectual (in operation)
5. **L**asting (that is, secure)

This is discussed in my book *Our Sovereign Saviour* (Fearn, U.K.: Christian Focus, 2002) on pages 47–56. It is my modest contribution to the present fine volume.

Roger Nicole



## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

**I**t has now been forty years since the first edition of this work was published. As I look back from the fortieth anniversary, several things have occurred, including the sudden calling home to heaven in 1991 of my previous coauthor, David Steele. In addition, the work has been translated into several foreign languages, plus braille, and this English edition has been reprinted over and over again. The interest in the work has been surprising and has far exceeded our expectations.

I welcome my new coauthor, Lance Quinn, my friend and pastor at The Bible Church of Little Rock. It was he who suggested that we produce a new edition on the fortieth anniversary of this work. He not only encouraged me to do so, but also wanted to be a part of the project, for which I am most grateful. To have Lance as my pastor, friend, and now coauthor, is a continual reminder of God's wonderful grace.

While our theology, as expressed in this small volume, has not changed, we have long thought that the book needed changes in several areas. First, a number of important works have been published since our first edition appeared in 1963. Some of these are reprints and others are new books and booklets. We have therefore included a number of additional titles in "Part Three: The Five Points Documented: Recommended Reading." The inclusion of the additional material is Lance's

work. He has a masterful knowledge of printed resources, thanks to his extensive library and voracious reading. Lance has also written appendix G.

Second, in the first edition of the book, in the section dealing with “The Perseverance of the Saints or the Security of Believers,” our primary emphasis was on God’s *preservation*, and hence our security as believers, rather than on the believer’s *perseverance*. This distinction is now highlighted because there are many who profess to be Christians, but give little or no evidence of a changed life. Many have placed their hope in some emotional decision or hazy commitment that they once made, with little regard to their present lifestyle. Therefore, we have added an appendix on “Perseverance and Preservation” to demonstrate the other side of this wonderful doctrine. We are not only *preserved* by God for salvation, but required by Him to *persevere* in the faith, striving continually toward a holy life. Without our *perseverance*, we can have no assurance of His *preservation*.

A third difference from the first edition is that all the biblical quotations in Part Two are now from the English Standard Version.<sup>1</sup>

Among the seven new appendices is an article written by James McGuire, senior pastor of Ward Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Northville, Michigan, entitled “A Kinder, Gentler Calvinism.” The wonderful doctrines of grace known as Calvinism have on occasion been harmed by the spirit in which they have been expressed. In this article, Dr. McGuire points out: “It is so much easier to be lost in the beauty, the faithfulness, the cohesiveness, the clarity of sound Reformed theology than to be lost in the practice of love, which is, after all, the

1. Other versions we recommend include the New American Standard Bible, the New International Version, The New King James Version, The Berkeley Version, the Amplified New Testament, *The New Testament: A Translation in the Language of the People*, by Charles B. Williams, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation*, by Kenneth S. Wuest, and the New English Bible.

great aim of orthodox theology. Galatians 5:6b says, *‘The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.’*” He concludes with this very appropriate appeal: “We need a kinder, gentler Calvinism because truth fueled by love is the most liberating force known to man.” We heartily agree, and suggest that you read Dr. McGuire’s appendix before reading the rest of this book.

The other appendices include “A Defense of Calvinism,” by C. H. Spurgeon; “The Practical Applications of Calvinism,” by Curt Daniel; “The Practical Importance of the Doctrine [of Predestination],” by Loraine Boettner; and “Calvinism and Arminianism Before and After: A Brief Historical Sketch,” by Lance Quinn. You will find each of these appendices to be a valuable contribution to your understanding and appreciation of Calvinism.

Dr. Curt Daniel, who has done extensive research into the history and theology of Calvinism, graciously reviewed the list of works in Part Three for completeness and accuracy. He has also given us permission to include chapter 73 of his work, *The History and Theology of Calvinism*, as the appendix mentioned above. For his assistance, we acknowledge our indebtedness and appreciation.

A special word of thanks also goes to Richard Fulenwider, whose personal ministry is to help those who are computer illiterate. He provided valuable help in putting the old edition into digital form, answering many calls for urgent help, and personally overseeing our getting the new edition computer-ready for the publisher.

And last, to my faithful, patient, and helpful wife, Betty, who joyfully shares and lives these wonderful truths, I express my love and profound admiration. Without her help on this new edition (not to mention the first one), you might have already laid it aside.

Curtis C. Thomas

I would like to express my thanks to and for my wife, Beth, who labors tirelessly in our home in order to allow writing projects like this to come to fruition. She is a true servant of the Lord on my behalf. For her, proclaiming the message of God's sovereignty in salvation is worth every sacrifice. I would also like to acknowledge our eight children (Lacey, Lancer, Logan, Lindsey, Lauren, Lucas, Lexa, and Lisa), with the prayer that they will all one day embrace the sweet doctrines of God's sovereign grace.

I would also like to thank the elders and members of The Bible Church of Little Rock, for whom the truths taught in this book are precious. They have greatly encouraged their pastor-teacher to preach these doctrines of grace. May we all live in the fullness of the grace we have received.

S. Lance Quinn

Soli Deo Gloria!

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

This work has been designed to serve as an *introductory survey* of that system of theology known as “the five points of Calvinism.” As we shall see, each of the five points, which make up this historic system, constitutes a distinct and important biblical doctrine. Viewed together, these five doctrines form the basic framework of God’s plan for saving sinners.

The purpose of this survey is threefold: We wish first to *define*, second to *defend*, and third to *document* the “five points.” In order to do this, we have divided the material into three separate parts, each of which forms an independent unit of study.

*Part One* deals with the *history* and *contents* of the system. The sole function of this section is to explain what Calvinism is. In order to show how and why the five-point structure of Calvinism was developed, we have discussed the origin and contents of “the five points of Arminianism.” These two opposing systems are contrasted, point by point, so that it might be clearly understood wherein and to what extent they differ in their interpretation of the biblical plan of salvation. The basic concepts of each system are analyzed, but no attempt whatsoever is made in Part One to defend the truthfulness of Calvinism.

*Part Two* is devoted to a *biblical defense* of the five points of Calvinism. After each point has been introduced and related to the overall system, some of the more important verses in

which it is taught are given. The various passages appealed to in the support of each point are classified under appropriate headings. Approximately 250 passages (consisting of well over 400 verses) are quoted in full. Great care has been exercised to avoid quoting verses out of their context. Before considering the biblical defense presented in Part Two, the reader should clearly understand the contents of Calvinism discussed in Part One.

*Part Three* is designed to encourage and aid the reader to make a thorough investigation of Calvinistic theology. We have listed and carefully documented (giving the author's full name, the title, the publisher's name and address, the date of publication, and the number of pages) over 90 works dealing with Calvinism and the individual doctrines contained within the system. Included in this list of titles are 60 separate books plus 15 reference works (systematic theologies, etc.), in addition to information concerning the Calvinistic contents of the great Protestant confessions of faith, and a number of booklets and tracts. Over 50 of the individual books (not including the reference works) are briefly introduced; we have indicated such things as the nature of their contents, their value, and their style. Many of these works have been written by the foremost theologians of both the past and the present. They set forth and defend, explain and clarify, state and answer objections to, as well as show the influence and value of, Calvinistic theology.<sup>1</sup>

It is our hope that the material contained in this survey will help to promote the spread of Calvinism and that many will thus be led to understand, to believe, and to propagate this biblical system of doctrine, which ascribes *all the glory* for the salvation of sinners *to God alone!*

1. Parts One and Two of this work were first published as an appendix to *Romans: An Interpretive Outline*. These two parts, along with the material contained in Part Three, are being published in this paperback edition in order to make it available at a more accessible price.

It is no novelty, then, that I am preaching; no new doctrine. I love to proclaim these strong old doctrines, that are called by nickname *Calvinism*, but which are surely and verily the revealed truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus. By this truth I make a pilgrimage into [the] past, and as I go, I see father after father, confessor after confessor, martyr after martyr, standing up to shake hands with me. . . . Taking these things to be the standard of my faith, I see the land of the ancients peopled with my brethren; I behold multitudes who confess the same as I do, and acknowledge that this is the religion of God's own church.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon  
"Election," *The Metropolitan Tabernacle*



# *Part One*

## THE FIVE POINTS DEFINED: THEIR ORIGIN AND CONTENTS

To understand how and why the system of theology known to history as Calvinism came to bear this name and to be formulated in five points, one must understand the theological conflict which occurred in Holland during the first quarter of the seventeenth century.

### POINTS OF CONTENTION

#### *The Protest of the Arminian Party*

In 1610, just one year after the death of James Arminius (a Dutch seminary professor), his followers drew up *five articles of faith* based on his teachings. The Arminians, as his followers came to be called, presented these five doctrines to the State of Holland in the form of a “Remonstrance” (i.e., a protest). The Arminian party insisted that the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism (the official expression of the doctrinal position of the Church of Holland) be changed to conform to the doctrinal views contained in the

Remonstrance. The Arminians objected to the doctrines upheld in both the Confession and the Catechism relating to divine sovereignty, human inability, unconditional election or predestination, particular redemption, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints. They wanted the official standards of the Church of Holland revised on these subjects.

### *The Five Points of Arminianism*

Roger Nicole summarizes the five articles contained in the Remonstrance as follows:

I. God elects or reprobates on the basis of foreseen faith or unbelief. II. Christ died for all men and for every man, although only believers are saved. III. Man is so depraved that divine grace is necessary unto faith or any good deed. IV. This grace may be resisted. V. Whether all who are truly regenerate will certainly persevere in the faith is a point which needs further investigation.<sup>1</sup>

The last article was later altered so as definitely to teach that the truly regenerate believer could lose his faith and thus lose his salvation. However, Arminians have not been in agreement on this point. Some have held that all who are regenerated by the Spirit of God are eternally secure and can never perish.

### *The Philosophical Basis of Arminianism*

J. I. Packer, in analyzing the system of thought embodied in the Remonstrance, observes:

1. Roger Nicole, "Arminianism," in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Everett F. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960), 64.

The theology which it contained (known to history as Arminianism) stemmed from two philosophical principles: first, that divine sovereignty is not compatible with human freedom, nor therefore with human responsibility; second, that ability limits obligation. . . . From these principles, the Arminians drew two deductions: first, that since the Bible regards faith as a free and responsible act, it cannot be caused by God, but is exercised independently of Him; second, that since the Bible regards faith as obligatory on the part of all who hear the gospel, ability to believe must be universal. Hence, they maintained, Scripture must be interpreted as teaching the following positions: (1.) Man is never so completely corrupted by sin that he cannot savingly believe the gospel when it is put before him, nor (2.) is he ever so completely controlled by God that he cannot reject it. (3.) God's election of those who shall be saved is prompted by His foreseeing that they will of their own accord believe. (4.) Christ's death did not ensure the salvation of anyone, for it did not secure the gift of faith to anyone (there is no such gift); what it did was rather to create a possibility of salvation for everyone if they believe. (5.) It rests with believers to keep themselves in a state of grace by keeping up their faith; those who fail here fall away and are lost. Thus, Arminianism made man's salvation depend ultimately on man himself, saving faith being viewed throughout as man's own work and, because his own, not God's in him.<sup>2</sup>

### *A Five-Point Response to Arminianism*

A national synod was called to meet in Dort in 1618 for the purpose of examining the views of Arminius in the light of

2. James I. Packer, "Introductory Essay," in *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, by John Owen (London: Banner of Truth, 1959), 3–4.