

“The relationship between saving faith and regeneration is vitally important in the biblical doctrine of salvation. It is a watershed issue in the debate between historic Calvinism and historic Arminianism. Although one can savingly believe the gospel without rightly understanding this relationship, the integrity of the biblical witness to the grace of God in that gospel cannot be consistently maintained without recognizing the priority of regeneration in the application of salvation. Dr. Barrett sees this truth clearly and argues persuasively for the monergistic—or Calvinistic—position. His arguments are exegetically careful, theologically rigorous, and historically informed. Monergists will welcome this book as a helpful guide to the issues at stake, and synergists will not be able to ignore its devastating critique of their strongest arguments.”

—**Thomas Ascol**, Pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Cape Coral, Florida;
Executive Director of Founders Ministries; Editor of the Founders
Journal

“Either God is sovereign or he is not. Matthew Barrett takes the bull by the horns and demonstrates that only the affirmation of complete divine sovereignty in all things can do justice to what God has done for our salvation. Attempts to water this down by finding room for human cooperation may be well-meaning, but they are bound to fail. This is a timely book on a perennially important subject, specially geared to meet current challenges. Every pastor and theologically alert Christian should read it.”

—**Gerald Bray**, Research Professor of Divinity, Beeson Divinity School,
Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama

“A movement that Collin Hansen identifies as young, restless, and Reformed is afoot. It entails a resurgence of Calvinist doctrine among young Christian scholars, many of whom are writing excellent PhD dissertations and recasting them as accessible books. Matthew Barrett may be young, restless, and Reformed, but even more, he is an emerging scholar and theologian who possesses great energy and passion for the gospel and for Christ’s church. His book *Salvation by Grace* reflects both his passion for God’s glory as revealed in the gospel and his energy to make clear for all his readers that when God calls everyone whom he purposes to save, his call is effectual and the Spirit’s making us alive is solely a divine act and not of our doing at all, given the fact that we were dead in our tombs of trespasses and sins, no less than the senseless and decaying body of

Lazarus in the tomb of death. *Salvation by Grace* reaffirms a time-honored teaching of the Scriptures, carefully accounts for monergism's corollary doctrines, and freshly presents it all for a new generation of young and perhaps restless minds that Matthew Barrett would like to influence to embrace the Reformed doctrine that salvation in Christ is entirely of God's effectual grace."

—**A. B. Caneday**, Professor of New Testament Studies & Biblical Theology, Northwestern College, St. Paul, Minnesota

"A number of virtues make *Salvation by Grace* a truly outstanding piece of work. The subject is timely. Even though the issues are old, they present themselves in new guises right up to the present. Barrett writes elegantly, his style belying the complexity of the subject. It is a learned book, showing masterful knowledge of the many sources discussed. Here we have polemics at their best, and yet the book is an opportune encouragement for anyone doubting the fully sovereign nature of God's love in giving us salvation."

—**William Edgar**, Professor of Apologetics, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

"Do we come to God or does he draw us to himself? This is the key question that divides monergism from synergism. Matthew Barrett has written an extremely helpful book and makes a strong case for monergism in the regeneration and effectual calling of sinners to Christ. This work is exegetically extensive, historically informed, and theologically thorough. Anyone who wants to understand the differences between monergism and synergism will find Barrett's work an able guide."

—**J. V. Fesko**, Academic Dean and Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology, Westminster Seminary California

"Calvin shocked the world and altered the course of history with a radical idea: God works miracles in the human heart. This, not predestination, was his signature contribution. Matthew Barrett's *Salvation by Grace* marshals a magnificent body of evidence that this explosive claim is scriptural."

—**Greg Forster**, Author, *The Joy of Calvinism*

"The doctrine of effectual calling—a better term than 'irresistible grace'—is at the heart of what it means to confess that Jesus Christ is the sole and sufficient Savior of spiritually dead sinners. Matthew Barrett has done a masterful job of

describing this teaching in its biblical, historical, and theological dimensions. An important book for theologians and all Christians who seek to understand the deepest meaning of God's grace."

—**Timothy George**, Founding Dean, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University; General Editor, Reformation Commentary on Scripture

"The issue tackled in this fine work is an ancient one: it was briefly touched on by Irenaeus in his debates with Gnostic determinists, and then fully aired in the fourth and fifth centuries by Augustine in his critique of Pelagianism. Of course, this was not the end of the story; it came up again in the writings of the Saxon theologian Gottschalk, only to be refought during the Reformation by numerous Reformation theologians in their replies to the Church of Rome. And it has been revisited a number of times since that major turning point in church history. Dr. Barrett is, then, in good company in defending this perspective on salvation. And in commending this work, we do not wish for more controversy, but hope and pray that the position recommended in the book might be pondered deeply by all who read it, and biblical truth ultimately prevail."

—**Michael A. G. Haykin**, Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Director of The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies & Research Professor of Irish Baptist College, Constituent College of Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland

"The Reformed idea of God's effectual call hails from the days of Augustine. Nowadays, it is often caricatured as treating men and women like puppets. In this comprehensive study, Matthew Barrett shows that the doctrine lies at the center of the application of God's sovereign grace to men and women who are unable to help themselves, restoring them to their true selves. The treatment is informative and judicious and, above all, timely."

—**Paul Helm**, Teaching Fellow, Regent College, Vancouver

"Matthew Barrett's *Salvation by Grace* is a compelling and much-needed reminder that the doctrine of monergistic regeneration is, as B. B. Warfield once put it, 'the hinge of the Calvinistic soteriology.' It is also a bold yet winsome challenge to the all-too-common assumption that the saving efficacy of the cross is ultimately determined not by God but by 'the will of man.' Fair, judicious, and admirably sensitive to the exegetical and theological subtleties of both classical and

contemporary discussions, Barrett capably demonstrates why Reformed believers insist that synergistic views of regeneration subvert the teaching of Scripture and surrender the glory of God in salvation. Enthusiastically recommended.”

—**Paul Kjoss Helseth**, Professor of Christian Thought, Northwestern College, St. Paul, Minnesota

“Matthew Barrett’s *Salvation by Grace* contributes significantly to the burgeoning literature on Reformed theology by young scholars. He ably leads the reader through philosophical and historical elements of the centuries-old debate between monergism and synergism. He correctly notes, however, that the primary issue is biblical and theological. Barrett identifies monergism—that God acts alone to effectually and sovereignly regenerate depraved sinners—as the sine qua non of biblical exegesis faithful to the Bible. A tour de force defense of the Calvinist doctrine of God’s sovereignty, *Salvation by Grace* illustrates the biblical concept of the unity of truth. After demonstrating that Augustinian original sin, Calvinist total depravity, and Lutheran bondage of the will correctly capture the Bible’s teaching on human nature, Barrett effectively shows the indispensability of interpreting faith, repentance, and conversion monergistically through careful exegesis of biblical texts. Faithful adherence to the coherence and consistency of biblical texts guides Barrett’s argument. Barrett also marshals ample confessional support for monergism from the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Confession. Finally, a careful probing of Arminian scholarship rounds out this fine book. What emerges is the vast diversity of synergistic interpretations that clutter the historical landscape, from Pelagius’s humanistic synergism to an array of contemporary evangelical views. Given the complexity of synergisms in the Arminian tradition, one finds it difficult, if not impossible, to discern any unity of truth that holds the field together. I came away from Barrett’s examination of monergism with a new appreciation for the benefits derived from adhering to confessional evangelicalism.”

—**Andrew Hofferker**, Emeritus Professor of Church History, Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi

“‘Salvation is of the LORD.’ All Christians would affirm this good news. Yet only monergism carries it through to the end, without equivocation. In this winsome and well-researched defense, Matthew Barrett clears away the brush—caricatures and distortions on both sides of the debate—to expose the wonder of God’s amazing grace. After drawing a precise historical map of the

range of views, Barrett engages the relevant passages with fresh insight and energy. His goal is not to win an argument but to win brothers and sisters to a fuller, richer, and more biblical account of the application of redemption.”

—**Michael Horton**, J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics, Westminster Seminary California

“The Arminian controversy in the Netherlands continues to rumble on in varying forms centuries later. Recently, a number of Arminian theologians—and others attempting a middle path—have highlighted these questions again. Barrett carefully considers their arguments from both biblical and theological angles. This is a thorough and persuasive piece of work, demonstrating that only the consistent monergism of classic Reformed theology does justice to the gospel as a work of God’s grace.”

—**Robert Letham**, Senior Lecturer in Systematic and Historical Theology, Wales Evangelical School of Theology

“Matthew Barrett’s *Salvation by Grace* provides a theological feast for its readers. Barrett shows a profound grasp of historical theology on this issue, a clear and pertinent deftness in exegesis, an impressive knowledge and understanding of the doctrinal nuances and connections, a detailed understanding of the contemporary literature on it, and a convincing way of synthesizing the vital points of argument. I agree with him; but if one does not agree with him, this is still a book to read in order to know what is at stake in the discussion.”

—**Tom J. Nettles**, Professor of Historical Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

“We all desire a view on the doctrines of grace that gives the lion’s share to God, both the work and the credit. Here you will find a compelling articulation of a view that does precisely that. Read this book and then rejoice in the God of our salvation, who brings about the miraculous transformation of sinners into saints—all to the praise of his glorious grace.”

—**Stephen J. Nichols**, Research Professor of Christianity and Culture, Lancaster Bible College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

“Matthew Barrett’s work on regeneration represents scholarship at its best. His book is exegetically convincing and theologically profound, with significant

pastoral consequences. The topic has not been explored in depth in recent scholarship, and hence this book is also timely.”

—**Thomas R. Schreiner**, James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

“Writing as an evangelical to evangelicals, and particularly reflecting the sometimes-heated soteriological discussions current within his Southern Baptist setting, Matthew Barrett here addresses for a new day issues highlighted by B. B. Warfield in his *The Plan of Salvation* (1918).”

—**Kenneth J. Stewart**, Professor of Theological Studies, Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, Georgia

“This is quite simply the most thorough and convincing account of divine sovereignty, both over the new birth and over effectual calling, that I’ve ever read. It is historically informed, lucidly written, eminently practical, and, most important of all, biblically faithful. This book, and Matthew Barrett in particular, renews my confidence that the so-called young, restless, and Reformed are in good hands and moving in the right direction. *Salvation by Grace* merits a wide reading and will undoubtedly prove to be an indispensable resource for the serious student of God’s Word. I cannot recommend it too highly.”

—**Sam Storms**, Lead Pastor for Preaching and Vision, Bridgeway Church, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

“*Salvation by Grace* approaches a deep and controversial topic with the goal of understanding it according to the Scriptures. Although very well reasoned, this is not primarily a philosophical or apologetic argument, but one that shows the biblical foundation for the linchpin of Calvinism. With an eye on the past as well as the contemporary debate, Dr. Barrett does an outstanding job of helping the reader understand why Calvinists hold their view and why they believe it really matters. The glory of God as the One who saves us from ourselves is powerfully presented so that the reader may be led to deeper worship, humility, and confidence.”

—**Erik Thoennes**, Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies; Chair, Biblical and Theological Studies Theology Department, Biola University and Talbot School of Theology, La Mirada, California

“The nature of grace is central to the Christian faith, and how one defines it speaks volumes about how one understands God, Christ, salvation, and even the church. In this book, Matthew Barrett lays out the historical, theological, and biblical material, and presents a compelling case for classic anti-Pelagian theology. Very helpful.”

—**Carl R. Trueman**, Paul Woolley Professor of Church History, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

“Whether you are looking at this book because you assume that you already agree or disagree with Matthew Barrett, or perhaps aren’t sure where you come down on these issues, don’t assume that you are holding in your hands a run-of-the-mill defense of classic Calvinist doctrine. What Barrett has given us in this book is a careful examination of the biblical-theological case for the sovereignty of God in salvation and a fair and accurate analysis of the historical and modern debates surrounding this vital doctrine. At the end of the day, this doctrine is not simply a matter for debate—it is about what the Bible reveals as the only hope of salvation that lost sinners in rebellion against their Creator have. So put aside all bias and the personal animosity that too often marks this debate, and prayerfully read the case that Barrett makes for salvation being, from beginning to end, the work of God alone.”

—**Brian Vickers**, Assistant Professor of New Testament Interpretation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

“Matthew Barrett has provided a tremendous resource for thoughtful Christian readers, both Arminian and Calvinist, in his careful and insightful analysis of the doctrines of God’s calling and regeneration of sinners to salvation. Since these doctrinal areas are at the heart of the great divide between an Arminian and a Reformed soteriology, it is critical that we understand clearly what the Scriptures say on these matters. Barrett’s illuminating discussion of the history of these doctrines, and his masterful treatment of all the relevant biblical passages, makes this book one of the most important contributions for adjudicating our differences and for leading us into a more faithful understanding of God’s gracious saving work in our lives as believers. For clarity in theological understanding, and for the sake of our own souls, I heartily recommend this book.”

—**Bruce A. Ware**, Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

“The perennial debate regarding the relationship between God’s sovereign grace and initiative and human sin and choice in our salvation continues unabated in our present day. Even so, Matthew Barrett’s very helpful defense of God’s sovereign and effectual grace in our salvation is much needed. In *Salvation by Grace*, Barrett not only sets the debate in historical context, but also, in a biblically faithful and theologically accurate manner, provides a convincing defense of God’s sovereign initiative in salvation—a defense that ultimately and rightly underscores our triune God’s incredible and amazing grace toward sinners. I highly recommend this work.”

—**Stephen Wellum**, Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky; Editor, The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology

“The testimony of Scripture is that ‘salvation belongs to the LORD!’ (Jonah 2:9). In *Salvation by Grace*, Matthew Barrett calls us to revel in this truth. As an heir of the Reformation, with the pastoral zeal and careful thinking that were part of that sixteenth-century revival, he reminds us that what we think about this subject matters. God’s glory and our assurance of salvation are wrapped up in whether God chooses and saves us or whether we choose him. Barrett’s work combines careful historical research, meticulous biblical exegesis, and thoughtful theological formulation. As you read it, worship the God who raises dead sinners to life in Christ!”

—**Shawn D. Wright**, Associate Professor of Church History, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

“Barrett’s examination of this critical area of theology is historically informed, providing an accurate setting and perspective for the discussion. It is also theologically precise, providing definitive expositions of all sides of the debate. It is surprisingly exhaustive, treating all the primary arguments and counter-arguments responsibly. And most importantly, it is exegetically compelling, bringing God’s own Word to bear on a doctrine designed to bring him glory. A valuable resource indeed! Highly recommended.”

—**Fred G. Zaspel**, Pastor, Reformed Baptist Church, Franconia, Pennsylvania; Adjunct Professor of Theology, Calvary Baptist Seminary, Lansdale, Pennsylvania

SALVATION BY GRACE

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THE CASE FOR EFFECTUAL CALLING
AND REGENERATION

MATTHEW BARRETT



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To my wife,
Elizabeth Barrett.

“An excellent wife who can find?
She is far more precious than jewels.
The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.”

Proverbs 31:10–11

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FOREWORD

One thing is clear to classical Arminians and Calvinists alike: if the grace by which we are saved is efficacious—irresistible—grace and only some and not all are saved, then this saving grace is given only to some (the elect) and not to all. And what happens as this saving, efficacious, irresistible grace, otherwise known as God’s effectual calling of the elect to salvation, is extended to them? By this efficacious calling and grace—and therefore of divine necessity in the lives of the elect—they are regenerated; they express saving faith in God’s atoning work for them in Christ; and they are thereby saved once and forever. Sovereign grace reigns here, as God first, in eternity past, chooses among the sinful and guilty human race those whom he, in his mercy, will save; and then in time and history he bestows on them the efficacious grace by which their dead hearts are enlivened and their blind eyes are opened. As this happens in them, they truly and savingly believe! Yet the expression of their faith, although a genuinely human expression of their natures made new by the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit, owes all that it is to the sovereign grace of God, which brought about in them both their new hearts and their newfound saving faith. As Ephesians 2:8–9 makes clear, both the “grace” and “faith” by which we are saved are, together, “the gift of God . . . that no one should boast.”

If, on the other hand, the grace that comes to us assisting our salvation is grace that we can accept or reject—a grace that only makes possible our salvation, while leaving the final and decisive outcome squarely in our hands—then our salvation is not purely and fully the result of sovereign grace. In this case, not only do we have a part to play in our salvation, we have the most decisive part: providing the thumbs

up or thumbs down on where we will spend eternity, despite what God wants, wills, or does, since the same grace is given to all, and that grace is equally resistible by all.

The core differences, then, between classic Arminianism and Reformed theology in the doctrine of salvation focus on the nature of the grace by which we are saved. Although there are other important differences, this is “ground zero,” as it were, in the battle being waged over these two mutually exclusive understandings of the salvation of sinners.

Over a decade ago, we edited a volume intended to defend various aspects of the doctrines of grace within a Reformed soteriology.¹ One of the reasons we felt the need for this book at the time was to demonstrate the difference between Arminian and Reformed understandings of the nature of saving grace. We realized that the Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace and the Reformed doctrine of efficacious grace both function as lynch pins within their own soteriological models. Included in our volume was an essay by Schreiner in which he contended that the Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace, though essential to an Arminian soteriology, could not rightly be supported or defended from Scripture. A second essay by Ware sought to demonstrate that the Reformed doctrine of efficacious calling and grace was fully supported and upheld by Scripture. If this is true—if the Arminian conception of prevenient grace lacks biblical support and the Reformed understanding of effectual calling and grace is a biblical teaching—then the long-standing debate between these two soteriological models is virtually settled. Yes, other issues also are important to deal with, but this issue—the issue of the nature of the grace by which we are saved—is central and ultimate in the whole of this debate.

In the light of the importance of this issue, we are thrilled by the major treatment Matthew Barrett has given to this crucial and central doctrinal area of our faith. It is hard to imagine a study of the passages, positions, and issues any more carefully and thoroughly done than Dr. Barrett has provided here. Our hope and prayer is that readers on

1. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware, eds., *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000).

both sides of the debate—as well as many “undecided voters” tilting one way or the other as they consider various arguments—will do themselves and others the favor of giving careful consideration to the biblical case made here for a full and decisive sovereign, saving grace.

Ultimately, we are pleased for the publication of this book because we believe that the truths it puts forward and the biblically saturated articulation they are given speak loudly of the glory of God in our salvation. To God alone belongs all glory. May greater numbers of his people see his sovereign grace in their salvation and ascribe to him the glory due to his name and to his name alone. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
Louisville, Kentucky

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project could not have been completed without the help and encouragement of others. First, I would like to thank my dissertation committee. My supervisor, Bruce Ware, was the first to hear my ideas for this project and from beginning to end his expertise has been invaluable to my writing. For years, Bruce has given to me an outstanding example of Christian scholarship in his writings defending Calvinism against Open Theism and Arminianism. I only hope to emulate his excellent ability to defend and expound the Scriptures clearly and acutely. His passion for the glory of God is unwavering, and he has given me a deep love and appreciation for the doctrines of grace and the sovereignty of God.

I would also like to thank Shawn Wright, whose superb knowledge of the Reformation and Post-Reformation periods saved me from much unnecessary labor. As a graduate of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary himself, Shawn's excellent dissertation on Theodore Beza has provided me with a tremendous example of a dissertation well done. Finally, I want to thank Tom Schreiner, whose excitement for my topic was unrelenting. Tom has for years taught in the classroom the priority of regeneration to faith, taking on all objections, and his keen sense for biblical exegesis in this project is found throughout. Furthermore, Tom's faithful preaching of the Word each Sunday has continually nourished my soul and shown me what it means to magnify God in Christ.

Besides my dissertation committee, I would also like to express my appreciation to my external reader, Michael Horton, J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics at Westminster

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Seminary, California. Horton's review of this project was both illuminating and encouraging. Horton continues to be for me an excellent example of a theologian committed to seeing the biblical truths of the Reformation proclaimed once again in our own day.

Finally, the most important person in my life is my wife, Elizabeth. We met at Biola University, and together we both developed a love for theology. Her zeal for knowing God never ceases to amaze me. Elizabeth has read and commented on every page (and footnote!) of this project. Many times she did this in the midst of mothering our daughters, Cassandra and Georgia, a privilege she treasures above all. I embark on few theological adventures without Elizabeth's input and remarkable scrutiny. Therefore, it is to Elizabeth that I dedicate this project.

Matthew Barrett
Louisville, Kentucky
May 2011

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
ATJ	Ashland Theological Journal
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>CTJ</i>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
<i>DBSJ</i>	<i>Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal</i>
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
ESV	English Standard Version
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBTM</i>	<i>Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
KJV	King James Version
LCC	Library of Christian Classics
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary

ABBREVIATIONS

NKJV	New King James Version
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
REC	Reformed Expository Commentary
RR	Review of Religion
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book is an abridged version of the author's original dissertation. To read the original, please see the e-book version from P&R Publishing, *Reclaiming Monergism: The Case for Sovereign Grace in Effectual Calling and Regeneration* (hereafter referred to as *Reclaiming Monergism*, e-book), which includes chapters on the history of the monergism-synergism debate; more extensive chapters representing and critiquing synergism; appendixes on the love of God, the will of God, and the relationship between effectual calling and regeneration in the Reformed tradition; as well as an extensive bibliography.

INTRODUCTION: THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE

How important is the doctrine of sovereign grace, as displayed in effectual calling and regeneration, to the system of Calvinism? According to B. B. Warfield, “Monergistic regeneration—or as it was phrased by the older theologians, of ‘irresistible grace’ or ‘effectual calling’—is the hinge of the Calvinistic soteriology, and lies much more deeply embedded in the system than the doctrine of predestination itself which is popularly looked upon as its hall-mark.”¹ Such a statement by Warfield is astonishing given the enormous focus on other issues such as the problem of evil or God’s election in eternity by Calvinists and Arminians. However, Warfield is not alone. Today Calvinist theologians still agree, believing that monergistic regeneration is the *sine qua non* of salvation.² For example, when asked what *the* difference is between an Arminian and a Calvinist, both R. C. Sproul and Sinclair Ferguson responded that it is the doctrine of monergistic regeneration. As Sproul stated, while Calvinists and Arminians can argue about many other issues, the litmus test is whether regeneration precedes faith in the *ordo salutis* or, stated otherwise, whether one has or does not have the ability to cooperate with the grace of regeneration.³ According to Sproul, the shibboleth for deciding whether or not one is a Calvinist or an Arminian is the doctrine of monergistic regeneration, the belief that God alone acts

1. Benjamin B. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, vol. 5 of *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 359.

2. R. C. Sproul, *What Is Reformed Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 188.

3. R. C. Sproul and Sinclair Ferguson, “Questions and Answers #3” (session held at the annual meeting of the Ligonier Ministries National Conference, Orlando, FL, 21 March 2009). Also see R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1986), 72–73.

to irresistibly and effectually call and regenerate the dead and passive sinner from death to new life, thereby causing the sinner to respond in faith and repentance.⁴

Whether or not regeneration precedes faith and is accomplished by God's sovereign will alone (monergism) or is conditioned upon man's faith, requiring man's free-will cooperation for its efficacy (synergism), continues to be one of the most important (or in Warfield's opinion *the* most important) divisions between the Calvinist and the Arminian today. As Scott Warren observes, "Perhaps the doctrine that most evidently distinguishes an Arminian theological framework from a Calvinist framework can be found in the *ordo salutis*—specifically in the question of whether faith precedes or follows regeneration."⁵ Warren is lucid: the doctrine of regeneration is the very hinge on which the debate turns. Yet, if Warfield, Sproul, and Ferguson are right that monergistic grace is the very hinge of Calvinistic soteriology, then it is no small issue that such a doctrine is under reconsideration by contemporary evangelicals. The traditional Calvinistic view is once again being challenged not only by Arminians but by those who wish to propose a modified scheme.

THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE

While monergism is an old doctrine, its relevance today is apparent as the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have been characterized by a resurgence of Calvinism, and with it a resurgence of a predestinarian theology which exalts God's sovereignty rather than the will of man.⁶ As J. Ligon Duncan III explains, "A fever for the glory of God has gotten into the bloodstream of a new generation."⁷ Duncan goes on to show that the resurgence of Calvinism has occurred in part because Christians are famished with the small view of God they have

4. Sproul, *What Is Reformed Theology?*, 185.

5. Scott C. Warren, "Ability and Desire: Reframing Debates Surrounding Freedom and Responsibility," *JETS* 52 (2009): 551.

6. J. Ligon Duncan III, "The Resurgence of Calvinism in America," in *Calvin for Today*, ed. Joel R. Beeke (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2009), 227–40.

7. *Ibid.*, 227.

been fed and are hungry for the “big view of God” portrayed in the Scriptures and systematically articulated in the doctrines of grace. The doctrines of effectual calling and monergistic regeneration are but a slice of this biblical view of God and yet, as seen above, they may be the very hinge of the Calvinist position. In short, the Calvinist argues that God and man do not cooperate but God alone acts to regenerate the sinner, causing man to repent and believe in Christ. The grace that the Spirit applies to the elect is not resistible but effectual and monergistic. It is not man’s will, but God’s will, that is the cause of new life. Therefore, for the Calvinist, effectual calling and regeneration causally and logically precede conversion in the *ordo salutis*. Moreover, the Calvinist is convinced that monergism preserves the sovereignty and glory of God in salvation while synergism robs God of his sovereignty and glory. Sovereignty is preserved because God’s will in salvation is not conditioned upon man’s will nor can it be successfully resisted by man’s will if God should so choose to save. God’s glory is preserved because God alone is the cause of the new birth. If God’s grace is dependent upon the will of man for its success, then God does not receive all of the credit.

However, with the resurgence of Calvinism has come a counter response from those within the Arminian tradition.⁸ While Calvinism places an emphasis on God’s sovereign grace, not only as displayed in predestination but in the application of monergistic grace in effectual calling and regeneration, Arminianism rejects monergism and instead affirms synergism, the view that God and man cooperate, making God’s

8. David Basinger and Randall Basinger, eds., *Predestination and Free Will* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986); Clark Pinnock, ed., *The Grace of God and the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989; repr., Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1995), and *Grace Unlimited* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999); Thomas C. Oden, *The Transforming Power of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993); Robert E. Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free Will: Contrasting Views of Salvation: Calvinism and Arminianism* (Nashville: Randall House Books, 2002); Jerry L. Walls and Joseph R. Dongell, *Why I Am Not a Calvinist* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004); Jack W. Cottrell, “The Classical Arminian View of Election,” in *Perspectives on Election: Five Views*, ed. Chad O. Brand (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 70–134; Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), and *Against Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011); David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke, eds., *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010).

grace conditional upon man's free will (see chapter 5). However, two types of Arminian synergism exist. First, there are those Arminians who affirm a *God-initiated synergism*. Man is totally depraved but God provides a universal prevenient grace whereby man's depravity is mitigated and man's will is enabled to either cooperate with or resist God's grace. While God initiates and enables, ultimately man has the final say as to whether or not God's grace will be effective.⁹ Such a view, often labeled "classical Arminianism" or "evangelical Arminianism," was advocated by Jacob Arminius and John Wesley, and contemporary advocates include Roger Olson and Wesleyan Thomas Oden (see chapter 5).¹⁰ Historically, such a view shares many affinities with the Semi-Augustinianism of the Middle Ages. Second, there are other Arminians who reject the doctrine of total depravity and argue that there is no such thing as prevenient grace in Scripture. Instead, while sin does have a negative effect on man, man is still able to exercise his free will and initiate grace in order to either accept or reject the grace of God. This Arminian view, which we can call a *man-initiated synergism*, was affirmed by Arminian Remonstrant Philip Limborch in the seventeenth century and is today advocated by Jack Cottrell, Bruce Reichenbach, and Clark Pinnock (see chapter 5).¹¹ Historically, such a view of synergism is consistent with the Semi-Pelagianism that Augustine wrote against. Nevertheless, despite these differences, both groups of Arminians agree that at the moment of decision the final determinative say is in the hands of the sinner to either accept or reject grace.

Today there has been an increasing effort by classical Arminians such as Thomas Oden and Roger Olson not only to refute contemporary Calvinists, but to clear the "Arminian" name from Pelagian and Semi-

9. See James Arminius, "Certain Articles to be Diligently Examined and Weighed," in *The Writings of James Arminius*, 3 vols., trans. James Nichols and William Nichols (Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956), 2:497. Also see Cottrell, "Classical Arminian View of Election," 120–21.

10. Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 137–78; Oden, *Transforming Power of Grace*, 31–208.

11. Cottrell, "Classical Arminian View of Election," 116–22; Pinnock, "From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology," in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, 21–24; Bruce R. Reichenbach, "Freedom, Justice, and Moral Responsibility," in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, 286.

Pelagian accusations. Consequently, Olson has put immense effort into representing “classical Arminianism,” as opposed to the Semi-Pelagian Arminianism represented by Cottrell, Reichenbach, and Pinnock, in order to make Arminianism more appealing to evangelicals today.

Synergism is any theological belief in free human participation in salvation. Its heretical forms in Christian theology are Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism. The former denies original sin and elevates natural and moral human ability to live spiritually fulfilled lives. The latter embraces a modified version of original sin but believes that humans have the ability, even in their natural or fallen state, to initiate salvation by exercising a good will toward God. When conservative theologians declare that synergism is a heresy, they are usually referring to these two Pelagian forms of synergism. Classical Arminians agree. . . . Contrary to confused critics, classical Arminianism is neither Pelagian nor semi-Pelagian! But it *is* synergistic. Arminianism is *evangelical synergism* as opposed to heretical, humanistic synergism. . . . I am referring to evangelical synergism, which affirms the prevenience of grace to every human exercise of a good will toward God, including simply nonresistance to the saving work of Christ.¹²

It is clear from what Olson says that Calvinism’s monergism has a counteropponent in Arminianism’s synergism. While there have existed and do exist today those Arminians of a Semi-Pelagian stripe, Olson is making an effort to counter contemporary monergists with a synergism that is tasteful to evangelicals. Olson is not alone, but his Arminian synergism is reiterated by others including Robert Picirilli, Kenneth Keathley, Steve Lemke, Jeremy Evans, Jerry Walls, Joseph Dongell, among others (see chapter 5).

Moreover, not only have contemporary Arminians reacted strongly to the monergism of Calvinism, but those who affirm a modified position also have responded with a model of their own. The modified position which has gained perhaps the most popularity and momentum

12. Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 17–18.

among contemporary evangelicals is that of Millard Erickson, Gordon Lewis, and Bruce Demarest.¹³ Such a view, while it borrows from both Arminianism and Calvinism, never fully agrees with either. The modified view's differences are easily demonstrated through the logical ordering of salvation. In the classical Arminian view prevenient grace is primary, followed by man's free will decision in conversion, and consequently God's response in regeneration. Therefore, regeneration is causally conditioned upon man's free-will choice to accept or reject God's grace. For Calvinism, the *ordo salutis* differs drastically. God does not respond to the sinner but the sinner responds to God. God's choice does not depend on the sinner's, but the sinner's choice depends on God's mercy and grace. Therefore, God's special calling is particular and effectual (as opposed to a calling that is universal, prevenient, and resistible) and regeneration monergistic. Consequently, effectual calling and regeneration causally precede conversion.

However, the modified view borrows and diverges from both of these views. While the modified view affirms a special calling that is effectual and prior to conversion, it denies that regeneration causally precedes conversion. Instead the modified view argues that regeneration is causally conditioned upon conversion.¹⁴ While advocates of this view readily acknowledge that they are borrowing not only from Calvinism but also from Arminianism,¹⁵ nevertheless, they insist that they remain monergists.¹⁶ Indeed, Demarest even includes his view ("Regeneration a Work of God in Response to Faith") as part of the "*Reformed Evangelical*" position.¹⁷ As shall be shown in chapter 7, Erickson, Lewis, and Demarest are defining monergism differently and more broadly than the Reformed tradition has defined it in the past, and the modified scheme, which places

13. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 901–78; Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology, vol. 4 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997), 49–96, 203–312; Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 3:17–172.

14. Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 3:57, 104.

15. *Ibid.*, 3:57.

16. For example, see Demarest, *Cross and Salvation*, 289.

17. *Ibid.*, 289–91. Emphasis original. Lewis and Demarest title their view "moderately Reformed" and a "modified Calvinistic hypothesis." Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 3:57.

conversion between effectual calling and regeneration, is nothing short of a novelty as it is without precedent among Reformed theologians.

However, Erickson, Lewis, and Demarest are not the only ones who try to lay claim to the label of “monergism.” More recently, Kenneth Keathley also claims he is justified in adopting the term “monergism,” a surprising move in light of the fact that Keathley’s view is almost identical to the Arminian position. Keathley rejects the modified view of Erickson, Lewis, and Demarest, as it concedes too much to the Calvinist affirmation of effectual calling.¹⁸ Instead, Keathley puts forward a very traditional Arminian view of synergism when he rejects the distinction between the gospel call and the effectual call and in its place affirms that God’s call is universal, God’s grace is resistible, man’s freedom is libertarian, and conversion is logically prior to regeneration. Monergism for Keathley means that God alone can be called the author of salvation, and he is not thwarted in his intention to save *as long as* man “refrains from resisting,” a definition radically different from how Calvinists use the term.¹⁹

In summary, for the Arminian, Calvinism’s doctrine of monergistic grace must be rejected, and for the modified advocate the doctrine must be qualified and altered at the very least. Such recent opposition demonstrates that while the monergism-synergism debate is an old one, it has taken on new significance in contemporary theology. Nevertheless, the question remains as to who is right. Does synergism or monergism best adhere to what Scripture says about the application of God’s grace to the sinner?

WHAT THIS BOOK IS ALL ABOUT

The monergism-synergism debate is not first and foremost a *philosophical* debate, nor is it primarily a *historical* debate, as important as

18. Kenneth Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty: A Molinist Approach* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 101–35.

19. As will become evident, Keathley’s arguments are no different from those of Arminian Roger Olson, who likewise says God’s grace is always successful as long as man is nonresistant (see Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 154–55). Therefore, I will interact with Keathley’s objections when I address classical Arminianism.

philosophy and history are to the discussion. Rather, the debate is primarily a *biblical-theological* debate. While Calvinists and Arminians disagree over a range of issues, both agree that the Bible must have the ultimate authority. Nevertheless, each view purports to be the biblical position. The thesis of this project will argue that the biblical view is that God's saving grace is monergistic—meaning that God acts alone to *effectually* call and *monergistically* regenerate the depraved sinner from death to new life—and therefore effectual calling and regeneration causally precede conversion in the *ordo salutis*, thereby ensuring that all of the glory in salvation belongs to God not man. Stated negatively, God's grace is not synergistic—meaning that God cooperates with man, giving man the final, determining power to either accept or resist God's grace—which would result in an *ordo salutis* where regeneration is causally conditioned upon man's free will in conversion and, in the Calvinist's opinion, would rob God of all of the glory in salvation. As J. I. Packer states, "All Arminianisms involve a measure of synergism, if not strong (God helps me to save myself) then weak (I help God to save me)."²⁰ And as John R. de Witt concludes, synergism essentially is "an attack upon the majesty of God, and puts in place of it the exaltation of man."²¹

This thesis evaluates both the Arminian and modified views as unbiblical in nature and consequently as failing to do justice to the scriptural portrayal of God's sovereignty and glory in salvation. Moreover, since the glory of God is at stake, such a debate is no small matter. Perhaps nobody understood this as much as John Calvin. Commenting on Calvin's monergism, I. John Hesselink remarks, "If that grace is undercut by some form of cooperation (synergism) between a semiautonomous 'free' human being and the sovereign Lord, the glory of God is compromised, as far as Calvin is concerned."²² The thesis of this project is in agreement with Calvin

20. J. I. Packer, "Arminianisms," in *Puritan Papers*, vol. 5: 1968–1969, ed. J. I. Packer (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 39.

21. John R. de Witt, "The Arminian Conflict and the Synod of Dort," in *Puritan Papers*, vol. 5, ed. Packer, 23.

22. John I. Hesselink, *Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 72.

precisely because Scripture itself denies that God's decision to regenerate his elect is conditioned upon man's cooperation. Only monergistic grace can fully preserve the sovereignty, glory, and majesty of God.²³ Therefore, while the present day Arminian and modified views seek to gain contemporary adherents, this project is relevant in that it is a call to evangelicals to reject the temptation of synergism in its various forms and return to the traditional Calvinist position, which is most faithful to Scripture.

VOCABULARY IN THE DEBATE

Too often in projects of this sort, whether it is from an Arminian or a Calvinist perspective, labels are thrown around carelessly. Consequently, caricatures result which only hinder dialogue in the debate. Therefore, it is crucial to categorize the terms that will be used throughout this project in relation to their respective parties. There are historical roots to both the monergism and synergism views.²⁴ Specifically, as many historians and theologians have recognized, we can identify at least four distinct positions concerning the monergism-synergism debate throughout church history: (1) humanistic monergism, (2) human-initiated synergism, (3) God-initiated synergism, and (4) divine monergism.²⁵ Each of these positions can be identified with certain groups within church history: (1) humanistic monergism is the view of Pelagius and Pelagianism, (2) human-initiated synergism is the view of Semi-Pelagianism, (3) God-initiated synergism is the view of the Semi-Augustinians, and (4) divine monergism is the view of Augustine and the Augustinians. Calvinism and Arminianism drew from these historical positions of the early and late Middle Ages. Calvinism appeals to Augustine for its view of efficacious grace.

23. John M. Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 186.

24. See chapter 2 of *Reclaiming Monergism*, e-book, to see how the four categories outlined in this section can be traced throughout church history.

25. Robert A. Peterson and Michael D. Williams, *Why I Am Not an Arminian* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 20–41.

On the other hand, Arminianism is diverse. Some, such as Philip Limborch and, today, Jack Cottrell and Clark Pinnock, advocate a view which aligns itself with Semi-Pelagianism. However, many Arminians have rejected Semi-Pelagianism and instead have affirmed what is the equivalent of the Semi-Augustinian view as they seek to be faithful to Arminius himself.²⁶

While these groupings may not encompass every theologian or movement, they are descriptive of the majority and serve to categorize each view according to the historical context. The parameters of this project are not broad enough to include an exhaustive history of all the views mentioned above. Other very capable historians have provided such histories elsewhere. Instead, this project will limit itself primarily to the theological arguments of the Calvinist position, the Arminian views, and recent modified views, drawing secondarily from history where necessary to show the origins, developments, and arguments of each view.

CONCLUSION

With these categories in mind we are now ready to enter into the monergism-synergism debate.²⁷ We shall begin in chapter 1 by first examining how monergism has been defined and defended in the Calvinist tradition. In chapter 2 we will turn to Scripture's affirmation of man's

26. William Gene Witt, "Creation, Redemption and Grace in the Theology of Jacob Arminius" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1993), 2:612.

27. There are four significant presuppositions to this project that should be identified. (1) This entire discussion assumes the legitimacy of the *ordo salutis* as a theological category. (2) Union with Christ serves as an umbrella category within which the entire *ordo salutis* finds its beginning, fulfillment, and *telos*, though it is in effectual calling and regeneration that the sinner is first united to Christ in time. (3) While all three persons of the Trinity are at work in each stage of salvation, it is the Holy Spirit in particular who takes on a central role in effectual calling and regeneration. (4) While there are diverse views among Reformed theologians as to the relationship between effectual calling and regeneration, I sympathize with older Reformed confessions/theologians who see them as intimately connected, if not synonymous. For a more extensive treatment of each of these, including an entire appendix devoted to number 4, see *Reclaiming Monergism*, e-book, from P&R Publishing.

total depravity and bondage of the will. Chapters 3 and 4 will make the case that in Scripture not only is there a gospel call but an effectual call. Furthermore, when Scripture speaks of regeneration it does so in monergistic terms. Chapter 5 will transition to the Arminian view(s), seeking to represent the synergistic position, while chapter 6 will provide a critique, demonstrating that such a view is unbiblical. Finally, chapter 7 will assess contemporary attempts at a *via media*, arguing that such attempts are fundamentally flawed.



MONERGISM IN THE CALVINIST TRADITION

This chapter will enter into the historical context in which the doctrine of monergism has been defended by seeking out several key representatives from the Reformed tradition, including Augustine, Calvin, the Canons of Dort, and the Westminster Confession.¹ While these are only a small sampling of the many voices in Reformed theology, they do serve to bring out the best formulations in the Calvinist tradition. They also demonstrate that this tradition has consistently affirmed the doctrine of monergism as that which is taught in Scripture and has rejected various forms of synergism as unbiblical. By examining these specific representatives we will see *exactly how* Calvinists historically have made their case for the doctrine of monergism. To skip over the history of a debate that is almost two millennia old would be irresponsible and runs the risk of applying labels (Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, etc.) inaccurately. We can avoid this error by carefully examining some of the major monergism-synergism controversies.

AUGUSTINE: *DOCTOR GRATIAE*

Sovereign grace is typically associated with Calvinism, and for good reason, since it was John Calvin and his followers who articulated the

1. For many other Reformed confessions, see James Dennison Jr., ed., *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries in English Translation*, 3 vols. to date (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2008–12). For interaction with far more secondary sources on Augustine, Calvin, Dort, and Westminster, see chapter 1 of *Reclaiming Monergism*, e-book, from P&R Publishing.

doctrine of effectual grace so clearly against the synergists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, in reading Calvin it is immediately apparent that he was not inventing the doctrine but was himself tremendously indebted to Augustine (354–430). As Albert Outler has noted, the “central theme in all Augustine’s writings is the sovereign God of grace and the sovereign grace of God.”² Therefore, it is Augustine who is the *terminus a quo* for the debate over grace and free will.³ However, in order to understand Augustine’s gracious monergism one must first understand Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism.

Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, and Semi-Augustinianism

Pelagius (c. 350), educated in Eastern theology (i.e., Antiochian) with a thorough knowledge of the Greek fathers, had a zeal that manifested itself in the ascetic legalism of monastery life and moral reform.⁴ However, it was the theology behind the moral reform that aroused the attention of Augustine.

First, Pelagius denied *tradux peccati* (transmitted sin) and *peccatum originis* (original sin), consisting of both inherited guilt and corruption.⁵ To Pelagius, it is blasphemous to think that God would transmit or impute Adam’s guilt and corruption to his progeny. Instead, Adam was an isolated person, not a representative of all mankind, and his act of sin injured himself alone, merely setting a bad example for all who followed to imitate.⁶

2. Albert C. Outler, “Introduction,” in Augustine, *Confessions and Enchiridion*, LCC, vol. 7, ed. Albert C. Outler (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), 14–15. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Augustine are designated by book and are taken from *Answer to the Pelagians I–IV*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Roland J. Teske, part 1, vols. 23–26 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Boniface Ramsey (New York: New City, 1997–99).

3. Mark E. Vanderschaaf, “Predestination and Certainty of Salvation in Augustine and Calvin,” *RR* 30 (1976–77): 1.

4. See B. R. Rees, *Pelagius: Life and Letters*, 2 vols. in one (Rochester, NY: Boydell, 1998), 1:xiv; Pelagius, *Pelagius’s Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Theodore De Bruyn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

5. Rees, *Pelagius*, 1:91; William J. Collinge, “Introduction,” in *Saint Augustine: Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*, trans. John A. Mourant and William J. Collinge (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 8–9.

6. Augustine, *Nature and Grace*, in *Answer to the Pelagians I*, 10; Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans*, 92; Robert F. Evans, *Four Letters of Pelagius* (New York: Seabury, 1968), 97; J. Patout Burns, “Introduction,” in *Theological Anthropology*, ed. and trans. J. Patout Burns, Sources of

Second, since no guilt or corruption is inherited by Adam's posterity, the will is free, unhindered by a depraved nature.⁷ The will is not enslaved to sin or in bondage to sin, but is just as able after the fall as before to choose that which is good.⁸ Therefore, Pelagius took offense at Augustine's prayer, *Da quod iubes, et iube quod vis* ("Give what you command; command what you will"), because these words "undermine moral responsibility."⁹

Third, since man is not infected by the guilt or corruption of Adam's sin and consequently man's will retains its ability to choose good or evil equally, an assisting grace lacks necessity. For Pelagius the will is not free if it is in need of God's help. Therefore, he rejected irresistible grace, as evident in his interpretation of Romans 8:29–30, "Those he foreknew would believe he called. Now a call gathers together those who are willing, not those who are unwilling."¹⁰ Grace does not consist in a sovereign or efficacious work of the Spirit upon a depraved sinner, as it would for Augustine, but in a mere external *illuminatio* (illumination) or revelation (enlightenment) of (1) the law of God, (2) creation, and (3) the example of Christ.¹¹ Therefore, salvation is monergistic for Pelagius but it is a *humanistic* monergism because God's aid (*adjutorium*) is not fundamentally necessary or prevenient since man is able in and of himself to exercise works of righteousness that merit eternal life, and therefore save himself.¹²

Early Christian Thought (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 5–6, 10–22; Rees, *Pelagius*, 1:35–36; Collinge, "Introduction," 8–9.

7. Augustine, *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin*, in *Answer to the Pelagians I*, 1.5; Rees, *Pelagius*, 1:35–36.

8. Pelagius, *Letter to Demetrias* 16.2, in Rees, *Pelagius*, 2:53; Collinge, "Introduction," 8.

9. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding, ed. John E. Rotelle, part 1, vol. 1 of *Works*, 10.40; idem, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, trans. Bruce Harbert, in *On Christian Belief*, part 1, vol. 8 of *Works*, 32 (hereafter *Enchiridion*, in *Works*); Rees, *Pelagius*, 1:1; Evans, *Pelagius*, 82.

10. Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans*, 112. Also see Evans, *Pelagius*, 121.

11. "Caelestius was accused at Carthage in 411 of teaching that the Law had the same effect as the Gospel in introducing men into the kingdom of heaven." Pelagius ran into the same problem at the Synod of Diospolis. Rees, *Pelagius*, 1:32–36; Evans, *Pelagius*, 111–14; Collinge, "Introduction," 8–9.

12. Pelagius states in his *Letter to Demetrias*, "It is by doing his will that we may merit his divine grace." Rees, *Pelagius*, 1:92 (cf. 1:15, 32; especially 1:129).