



## Scriptures and Doctrine :: an invitee

**an invitee - posted by Svineklev, on: 2004/12/14 16:46**

Keith asked me to "weigh in," so to speak, to this conversation on the Doctrines of Grace...so here I am.

I don't have much time right now, but I'll see how far I can get.

I am a five-pointer and make no apologies about it. Reformed Theology has meant a great deal to my walk with Christ, making me more vulnerable and teachable before God and comforting me an immeasurable amount. Augustine's take on Soteriology is breath-takingly beautiful. I often weep just thinking about it.

I have trouble understanding many Arminians' antipathy toward Calvinism. Arminian Theology concerns me terribly but does not make me angry. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that numerous Scripture passages can be taken either way. We should never get into shouting matches proclaiming to be more "biblical" than the other side--it simply isn't true.

I think it's easy to see someone on the other side of the fence, espousing something decidedly different from our own (beloved) view, as inflexible and arrogant. Let me assure you that I hear Anti-Paradox as lacking a certain amount of tact. But I do not see this forum's response as particularly patient or sensitive.

It may surprise you that coming from the "other side" as I do--and used to hob-nobbing with (more closely) Calvinist types--that I tend to look upon ARMINIANS as harsh and arrogant and inflexible. (They just don't seem to LISTEN with their hearts!) BTW, if you run into an arrogant Calvinist (which I am quite sure you have had plenty of opportunities to do), you have run into someone who DOES NOT UNDERSTAND the Doctrines of Grace aright. If it doesn't leave you feeling wretched, humbled, and graced, you should go back to square one and hit your knees in fervent prayer.

Anyway, just a couple of comments and I have to go.

1.) The Red Heifer (though termed a chat't in Numbers 19) is not really a sin offering. The ashes, mixed with water are used for purification of those ceremonially unclean from having come in contact with a dead person (stumbling over a grave, being in the house when someone dies, etc.) I don't think it can be applied in the way it was in this forum...that's not what Hebrews is saying.

2.) I think Keith is on to something when he says that at the very least we have to see God as responsible for sin, and as sovereign over it. God is not the "author of sin" in that he himself can participate in it. But I for one am thankful that in some sense he is master over it and NOT Satan. (Satan is sin's slave.)

3.) Watch your thoughts and words carefully. Someone said they were "slipping" on the idea of original sin. We can agree to disagree on infra- vs. supralapsarianism (I tend toward the latter as more consistent but understand why so many would find it difficult, to say the least). The belief in original sin, on the other hand, is part and parcel of orthodoxy. Pray and study hard, my friend!

4.) Hebrews 6, I Corinthians 8:11, I John 2:2 do not make me lose a wink of sleep. How do y'all deal with the countless verses on election? I don't really mean that as a challenge but as an invitation to share the reasons for our divergent "slants" on the faith. Iron sharpens iron. I read the Openness Theologians because they have something to teach me about the dynamic quality of the interaction between God and Man. Calvinists tend to focus too strongly on God's transcendence and as a result sometimes downplay his immanence. (BTW, Calvinists aren't the slightest little bit against freedom of the will. Our argument has to do with the ABILITY of the will. We all are free to leap tall buildings at a single bound, but only Clark is up to the task....)

5.) I should confess that I'm a better five-pointer than I am a Calvinist. I'm leery of basing my whole theology on any one group's notions. Parts of Reformed Theology's take on the covenant don't wash with me. I tend toward believing in baptism and toward aligning regeneration and conversion closer than they do. But I'm still a work in progress.

6.) Remember that for Protestants, Soteriology is mostly about Justification. Most Calvinists are quite synergistic about

Sanctification. Prevenient Grace hasn't even come up as an issue despite the fact that it is the crux of the issue. Is it efficient or just effective? There's really not that much difference between us (unless you've slipped into Pelagianism and don't require Prevenient Grace...Pelagius' principle problem was that he didn't believe in original sin).

7.) I've gone way past time on this. Gotta go sing in the "Messiah." May he be with you and yours throughout the coming Nativity season!

Soli Deo Gloria...

**Re: an invitee - posted by RobertW (), on: 2004/12/14 17:25**

Hi Svineklev,

Welcome to the site and conversation. We are dealing with these topics on the thread you had mentioned so I will follow that thread to keep it all together. :-) There are lots of topics and questions already going. I would be interested to hear your response especially to Wesley's comments referring to Satan.

Jhesus est amor meus

-Robert

**Re: an invitee - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/12/14 18:18**

Quote:  
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-----

Please watch your thoughts and words carefully. No-one said they were slipping on the idea of original sin. I said I was a one-point Calvinist and slipping. I believe strongly in original sin; I reject original guilt. It is the Calvinist understanding of 'Total Depravity' I question not the Biblical doctrine of congenital sin. If you are going to take part in these discussions you would be wiser to get your facts straight before launching your counterattacks.

**Re: an invitee - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/12/14 18:27**

Quote:  
-----The Red Heifer (though termed a chatat in Numbers 19) is not really a sin offering. The ashes, mixed with water are used for purification of those ceremonially unclean from having come in contact with a dead person (stumbling over a grave, being in the house when someone dies, etc.) I don't think it can be applied in the way it was in this forum...that's not what Hebrews is saying.  
-----

(Heb 9:13 KJV) For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

the implication being that the day of atonement sacrifices and the red heifer both had the same focus.

(Num 19:4 KJV) And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times:  
see Lev 16:14 in the Day of Atonement ritual.

(Num 19:9 KJV) And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin.

**Re: an invitee - posted by crsschk (), on: 2004/12/15 2:16**

Welcome Svinelev,

Quote:

-----  
It may surprise you that coming from the "other side" as I do--and used to hob-nobbing with (more closely) Calvinist types--that I tend to look upon ARMINIANS as harsh and arrogant and inflexible. (They just don't seem to LISTEN with their hearts!) BTW, if you run into an arrogant Calvinist (which I am quite sure you have had plenty of opportunities to do), you have run into someone who DOES NOT UNDERSTAND the Doctrines of Grace aright. If it doesn't leave you feeling wretched, humbled, and graced, you should go back to square one and hit your knees in fervant prayer.  
-----

Well, glad to have you brother and as friend of our friend Keith. This kind of stood out; *"that I tend to look upon ARMINIANS as harsh and arrogant and inflexible"* Some of us are actually neither though I guess there is always a 'camp' to put us in. (Not meaning to be snide about it). We are not all theologians around here and I am thankful there are some who would fit into that role as such, we have gleaned much from them. Some of us 'lay' people are just trying to grasp things.

Just curious about the stereotype there, it just sounds well...like the way you put it.

About Anti-paradox,

Will make a comment about that being that I was primarily involved. Still don't feel great about how that was handled in a lot of ways. Some of the time and in this instance it is primarily conduct not content that is the problem. You can't just come in here and set the rules as to how you want to go about things, ignoring other members and taking shots at them. There is always room for misunderstandings and time to make adjustments for our lack of journalistic skills, we are from all walks and educations. So, this is not to justify but to clarify a bit. I am truly sorry if I grieved the brother unjustly and surely could have used better tact myself, find no pleasantries whatsoever in these dealings.

**Re: - posted by KeithLaMothe, on: 2004/12/15 14:03**

Re: the confusion about Bro. Ron's "slippage": peace, brothers. I do not think my friend was intending it as a "counterattack" or any kind of "attack". Making the jump from "slipping on the T" to "slipping on original sin" is somewhat unwarranted, but I think an understandable mis-jump. My friend's concern from that point, though based on a premise incorrectly arrived at, would be merely an echo of Wesley's thoughts on the matter: that a belief in congenital depravity is what distinguishes Christianity from "the most refined heathenisms".

But you have made very clear your orthodoxy on the matter, Bro. Ron, no worries there.

**Re: - posted by Svinelev, on: 2004/12/15 20:48**

crsschk--

I expect to be misunderstood at first. That is the nature of the beast. Y'all don't know me from Adam's housecat, as so me say here in the South.

I had no intention of saying that Arminians are harsh, arrogant, or inflexible. Some of my best friends are Wesleyan in perspective. I was simply saying that when you are on opposite sides of an issue, the other side will invariably SOUND pedantic. I get tired of Arminians telling me how much they hate John Calvin and his ideas. They are well intentioned, I know. But his ideas have been a godsend to me. He was an incredible man of God and an exceptional exegete. They'll have much to apologize for when they meet him in heaven. Wesley, likewise, was a giant. They both have their faults. They both got things wrong. But the things we people can learn from them!

Calvinists come across as harsh to Arminians. Arminians come across as harsh to Calvinists. Let's realize this and overcome it. That's all I was saying.

Love ya, brother!

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2004/12/16 8:47

Hi Svineklev,

Quote:  
----- He was an incredible man of God and an exceptional exegete. They'll have much to apologize for when they meet him in heaven.  
-----

I learned a lot from Institutes in my early years studying election and also found the commentaries useful. I gleaned much from the polemic writings of those who followed and admire their knowledge and skill with the pen. And, I used to feel similar to the way you do also until I did a study on his pursuit of Michael Servetus. Perhaps we shall deal with him here.

#### Michael Servetus

By Robert Wurtz II

Michael Servetus was born around 1511 and lived 42 years. A Spaniard raised in Villanueva he studied under a Franciscan monk. He is mainly known for two things:

1) To the Evangelical or Protestant community as a man who had an unorthodox view of the Trinity. Servetus is described as having a "highly unorthodox trinitarian" view. At the age of 20 years he wrote a tractate called *De Trinitatis Erroribus* (Errors of the Doctrine of the Trinity). He made this view well known and became a target to those who feared his views were a threat to Christendom. Other examples of his theology was his rejection of the doctrine of original sin.

2) To the secular writer, as a student of math and medicine, Servetus was the first to publish a description of the blood's circulation through the lungs. Galen was a man who had supposed 'aeration' of the blood took place in the heart. Some Christians believed that because the 'spirit' was thought to be in the 'pneuma' (breath) it MUST enter the blood in the heart. Servetus demonstrated that the 'air' or 'breath' went into the blood in the lungs. If you get an encyclopedia and look Servetus up- they are always quick to point to this fact. Some even suggest this is why he was killed.

Michael Servetus was burned at the stake at Geneva. He cried out to God for mercy as he burned and is said to have asked Calvin to forgive him before his sentence was carried out. Some accounts contend that Calvin could not help Servetus and his influence was not enough to stop the punishment- while others assert that Calvin pursued Servetus and caught him when he went to hear Calvin preach a sermon. It was a fatal miscalculation for Servetus.

Even though John Foxe defends Calvin in this matter there is a sentence we read worth noting and it is the one in which I wish to affix our attention; It cannot, however, be denied, that in this instance, Calvin acted contrary to the benignant spirit of the Gospel. It is better to drop a tear over the inconsistency of human nature, and to bewail those infirmities which cannot be justified. He declared he acted conscientiously, and publicly justified the act.

To this I must ask, how could this be? I am open to any answer that will make it make sense. We have nearly crucified preachers in America for laying with harlots and here is a person who appears by most accounts to be responsible for burning a man to death. The same Holy Spirit that brings forth the same fruits of the Spirit functioned in that day as He does in this. And yet, these men are celebrated for their great knowledge and worth and had the capacity to burn men to death or behead them? Or, as Luther wrote, "On the Jews and their Lies" suggesting that their tongues should be cut out? What spirit would we say that a person had in our day who would do such things? Would we say that it was the Holy Spirit? Would we justify them by saying that capital punishment for heresy was common and they didn't know better? Or as Servetus who was already condemned by Rome and some justified his burning by saying, "Well, he was dead anyway." Lying, fornication is common in our day also and it does not excuse us as believers to do it. Some preachers are money grabbers, but we don't say, "well, it is common in these days." Can anyone call such an anti New Testament act anything other than Murder? And if we say it is murder what shall we say in light of 1 John 3:15? he was not put to death for murder, he was put to death for 'heresy.' Did he kill this man for heresy contrary to the New Testament and we call it "out of love" or a "mercy killing?" or do we just pretend it never happened and in turn keep swallowing the teachings?

How did Paul deal with heresy? He reproved, rebuked, and exhorted with all long suffering and doctrine. What when they would not listen? He that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject knowing that such is subverted and smitten being condemned of himself. He turned Alexander over to satan that he would learn not to blaspheme. And in the end, when these did not repent, what did the Apostle say? He said, "The LORD reward them according to their works."

If I am not near to the man Calvin and others were in terms of biblical studies and I can readily site these passages with no aid of concordance as my authority on dealing with such matters, how much more should these men who argued doctrines that often only they understood, should have been well aware of these things.

God Bless,

-Robert

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2004/12/16 10:11

Svineklev,

No problem. I guess I am just not fond of being categorized as either, not that that has happened here.

These are two men who came to their own particular 'conclusions' on something to this fallible brain just seems so far out of reach and often comes across as 'explaining God' where no explanation is possible.

If there is one topic that has gotten a lot of ink around here I would think this tops the list.

Here is another one of many:

([http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic\\_id306&forum36#2097](http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id306&forum36#2097)) my theory on predestination

Liked AlmondBranch's reply at the bottom of that thread.

Wanted to key in on this:

Quote:

-----I get tired of Arminians telling me how much they hate John Calvin and his ideas.  
-----

Mirroring what Robert brought up here one of the most disturbing things about this whole issue is that one word;

Hate.

Reading back through the history of the Anabaptist's, Amish, Mennonites, Brethren.

What is mind boggling is that as Robert alluded to, how is it possible to put people to death and/or harbor such vehement opposition to our own 'kind' over misunderstandings of scripture?

How could have these scripture's escaped their attention:

Luk 9:52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

Luk 9:53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

Luk 9:54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

Luk 9:55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, **Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.**

Luk 9:56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

And that is to both 'sides'.

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/12/16 15:00**

I think I have posted this before somewhere but it's been a while...

George Whitfield and John Wesley were bosom buddies but Whitfield was an ardent Calvinist and Wesley a passionate Arminian (or so he called himself). There are couple of stories told about them. Although my sympathies are usually with Wesley I have to say that there is something about the spirit of Whitfield that always warms me.

Asked by a censorious Calvinist whether he thought they might see John Wesley in heaven, Whitfield replied "I fear not. He will be so near the throne, and we shall be at such a distance, that we shall hardly get a sight of him.

Wesley wrote that he had come to know many believers in predestination whose "real Christian experience" could not be denied, and adding that this fact stared him in the face and was clear proof that predestination "is only an opinion, not subversive of the very foundations of Christian experience, but compatible with a love for Christ and a genuine work of grace. Yea, many hold it at whose feet I desire to be found in the day of the Lord Jesus."

It was nearly always the followers of Whitfield and of Wesley who caused the trouble rather than the men themselves.

another Wesley quote: Beware of a dividing spirit; shun whatever has the least aspect that way. Therefore say not "I am of Paul, or of Apollos:" the very thing which occasioned the schism at Corinth. Say not "This is my preacher, the best preacher in the land; give me him and take all the rest..." Do not run down any preacher. Do not exalt any one above the rest, lest you hurt both him and the cause of God. On the other hand, do not bear hard upon any by reason of some incoherence, or inaccuracy of expression; no nor for some mistakes, were there really such...

We are to bear with those we cannot amend, and to be content with offering them to God. This is true resignation. And since he has borne our infirmities we may well bear those of each other for his sake.

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2004/12/16 15:14**

Quote:  
-----We are to bear with those we cannot amend, and to be content with offering them to God. This is true resignation. And since he has borne our infirmities we may well bear those of each other for his sake.  
-----

Thanks for sharing these quotes Bro. Ron. It is quite encouraging. Praise God!

God Bless,

-Robert

**Re: - posted by Svineklev, on: 2004/12/16 16:09**

RobertW--

I have thought along very similar lines (though I think you may be minimizing the extent to which Servetus strayed from orthodoxy...most historians I have read do not credit him with maintaining Trinitarian beliefs...and some seem to imply he wanted to be caught).

I truly don't believe we should give these men a "free pass" just because they were men of their age, so to speak. (We can't turn a blind eye to Wesley's treatment of his wife either.) On the other hand, their valuable contributions cannot be simply ignored. In our own day, what do we do with the infidelities of someone like a Martin Luther King, Jr.? Or the often bizarre behavior of a Gandhi? It seems that sometimes with great strength comes great weakness.

Unfortunately--and perhaps inexplicably--great ideas often come from fallen men (and insipid concepts sometimes issue forth from moral giants). I wish the two always went hand in hand, but that has not been my experience.

In other words, I heartily agree with you (with two slight caveats). 1. There was a time of too little tolerance; ours is a time with too much. We don't treat theological differences with the gravity they deserve. The consequences of poor theology can be devastating to spiritual lives. 2. Make sure you separate the ideas from the man. It's not that there isn't any linkage: good men and good theology do go together. But there is no one-to-one correspondence. Ideas must be evaluated on their own.

Thanks for bringing this up!

**Re: - posted by revival9 (), on: 2004/12/16 16:45**

I've read 80% of the posts on the different threads spawned from Anti-Paradox's original post: Wonderfully done, thoughtful, kind-hearted, while expressing fervently the mind of each poster. I am humbled and awed. What a site.

(quote) Mirroring what Robert brought up here one of the most disturbing things about this whole issue is that one word;

Hate.

Reading back through the history of the Anabaptist's, Amish, Mennonites, Brethren. What is mind boggling is that as Robert alluded to, how is it possible to put people to death and/or harbor such vehement opposition to our own 'kind' over misunderstandings of scripture? (end of quote)

I remember reading about the Pilgrims. I believe William Bradford graphically describes the killing of an Indian enemy, whose head was prominently displayed on a stake for 20+ years.

While accepting the history of the U.S. as marvelous and special, I cannot align such things with the humble Christ, Who brought us a higher law to live by, a higher calling than revenge, and a higher protection than self-defense. I have chosen to listen to the witness of the pre-Nicene church on these matters and accept their opinion: It is wrong for followers of

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Christ to kill, it is wrong for them to take up arms against anyone, it is wrong to have our enemies put to death. God desires us to follow HIS ways, whether we understand or not. No matter if they cause us to die or suffer or be misunderstood.

This whole discussion makes me ponder many things. But something keeps jumping to the fore --- our whole reason for existence: To know and to love The Most High God, to hear Him and walk with Him. To have a personal, give-and-take relationship with Him. To realize beyond a shadow of a doubt that He desires THAT from ME...

Why, I ask, why. Yet there it is, in front of my face on every page of scripture. The Greatest Mystery of All.

Mrs. Fred