

Hyper-Calvinism:

The subject of this essay is Hyper-Calvinism. It is an important subject because wherever the Biblical doctrine of predestination (a distinguishing feature of Calvinism) is loved and protected, a mistaken tendency towards Hyper-Calvinism is likely to arise. Such a tendency must be avoided.

To that end, we will compare and contrast three traditions: Arminianism, Calvinism, and Hyper-Calvinism. For further reading I recommend Ian Murray's, *Spurgeon & Hyper-Calvinism*.

If you put the word, "hyper," in front of something, it usually adds the negative connotation of being exaggerated to a fault. A Hyper-Calvinist, then, might be perceived as someone who carries the doctrine of predestination too far. But Hyper-Calvinism is not simply some kind of loosely defined predestinarian extremism.

Then what is it? Hyper-Calvinism has at least four distinguishing beliefs: (1) that God only desires the salvation of the elect; (2) that God only loves the elect; (3) that only the elect are responsible to exercise saving faith; and (4) the gospel should only be offered to the elect. The fourth is perhaps the most distinctive trait.

Three theological traditions are relevant to this topic: Arminianism, Calvinism, and Hyper-Calvinism. Arminians do not believe in predestination in the same way that Calvinists and Hyper-Calvinists do. Arminians also believe salvation is possible for anyone. But the other two traditions believe salvation is inevitable for the elect and impossible for the non-elect.

Yet, Arminians and Hyper-Calvinists have more in common than meets the eye. As polar as they may seem, there is an unsuspecting similarity between them that makes the regular Calvinist the odd man out.

This similarity becomes evident by exposing certain fundamental principles upon which both systems operate. Arminians and Hyper-Calvinists, we will demonstrate, are top and bottom of the same spoon, alter egos of the same theological misconceptions and presumptions. An examination of four points demonstrates this.

First, Arminianism and Hyper-Calvinism both believe that God's decree and God's desire must correspond. The Arminian believes that since God desires that all should be saved he did not decree that only some be saved. The Hyper-Calvinist believes that since God only decrees that some be saved, he must not desire that all be saved. Their principle agreement is that there must be equal correspondence between God's decree and desire. But the

regular Calvinist believes that there are some things that God decrees which he does not desire (like sin and rebellion), and some things that he desires which he does not decree (like universal repentance). This is a great mystery. But there are more.

Secondly, Arminians and Hyper-Calvinists both believe that God's love is restricted by his intent to save. Arminians believe God loves the whole world, therefore he is prepared to save the whole world. Hyper-Calvinists believe that since God only saves the elect he only loves the elect. Again, their principle agreement is that there must be equal correspondence between God's love and intent to save. But, Calvinists believe that in some way God loves even those he does not intend to save, because he tells us to love our enemies, exemplifying himself as making the sun rise and the rain fall on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Thirdly, Arminians and Hyper-Calvinists both believe that ability to exercise saving faith, and responsibility to exercise saving faith must correspond. Arminians suppose that since all are responsible to exercise saving faith, all must be able. Hyper-Calvinists believe that since only the elect are able only the elect are responsible. But, true Calvinists believe that even though many are not able to exercise saving faith, all are responsible.

Lastly, Arminians and Hyper-Calvinists believe that

knowledge of the extent of the atonement is necessary for the proclamation of the gospel. Arminians say that since the atonement extends to all, the gospel should be offered to all. Hyper-Calvinists believe that since the atonement only extends to the elect, the gospel should only be offered to the elect. Yet, Calvinists believe that though the benefits of the atonement will not extend to all in a saving way, the benefits are to be offered to all.

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