

Does Arminianism Diminish God's Glory?

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I. The Charge Against Arminians

One charge often heard against Arminianism is that by allowing for human agency to play a significant role in the process of salvation, Arminians decrease the scope of God's agency and thus diminish the glory that is rightly due him. Warfield, for example, urged that "men owe in each and every case their actual salvation, and not merely their general opportunity to be saved, to [God]. And therefore, to him and to him alone belongs in each instance *all the glory*, which *none can share with him*." (Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, n.d., p. 23, emphasis added). Similarly, Reymond claims that "Paul recognized that the degree, however small, to which an individual is allowed to be the decisive factor in receiving and working out the subjective benefits of grace for his transformation 'detract(s) in the same proportion from the monergism of the divine grace and from the glory of God'" (Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998, p. 371; quoting Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1954, p. 108, emphasis added). Berkouwer argues for similar reasons that man can only be "completely passive in the process of conversion," and there can be no "cause within men for their different reactions to the gospel" (G. C. Berkouwer, *Divine Election*, Translated by Hugo Bekker. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960. p. 34). Boice likewise concluded that "If we have a part in salvation, then our love for God is diminished by just that amount" (James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1986, p. 517).

In general, Arminians are charged with having a man-centered theology that detracts from God's glory by allowing for genuine free agency on the part of humans, whereas Calvinists claim to have a God-centered theology that recognizes God as having unilaterally determined and sovereignly decreed all that occurs within his creation (see, e.g., Thomas Schreiner & Bruce Ware, "Introduction," *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995/2000, p. 16). This argument by Calvinists has strong emotional overtones, and tends to be effective in silencing would-be objectors, given that no truly humble believer wishes to be seen as diminishing the glory of God.

There are several significant problems, however, with the argument that Arminianism diminishes God's glory. In this essay I would like to offer a three-point rebuttal of this argument, and in so doing argue that the Arminian position fully recognizes and promotes the glory of God. (Note 1)

II. Rebuttal One: God Alone Effects Salvation

First, Warfield's claim that Arminians attribute only their "general opportunity to be saved" but not their "actual salvation" to God does not accurately portray the Arminian position. When he implied that Arminians hold humans (not God) to be responsible for their "actual" salvation, Warfield presumably had in mind the Arminian belief that it is ultimately man's decision whether or not to accept God's offer of salvation (i.e., God does not override human free will in the matter). Granted that Arminians believe this, this does not mean that Arminians believe man to be responsible for his "actual" salvation. Arminians recognize and embrace the fact that man does not have the ability to regenerate himself or bring about his own justification, and it is these activities on God's part that Arminians recognize to lie at the very heart of what it means to be "saved" from sin. Thus, Arminians acknowledge that only God can effect one's actual salvation. Man simply exercises faith, and there is nothing in this act of faith itself that can mechanically bring about or effect salvation. Salvation instead occurs only when *God* chooses to respond to man's faith so as to regenerate and justify the believer; there is nothing

beyond God's own character that would in any sense force him to do so. Moreover, these saving acts are accomplished solely by the power of God. The fact that God conditions his willingness to effect man's salvation on man's faith response in no way contradicts the reality that it is God and God alone who actually effects salvation. Thus, God does more than simply lay the preparatory groundwork for salvation or provide a "general opportunity." God effects each believer's actual salvation.

Arminians can thus heartily agree with Jonah that "salvation is from the Lord" (Jonah 2:9) and with the psalmist that "salvation belongs to the Lord" (Psalm 3:8) without accepting the Calvinist contention that "man must be completely passive in the process of conversion" (Berkouwer, see above). Salvation is "from the Lord" precisely because it can occur only through the provision, intention, and power of God, and because no man can wrest salvation from God apart from his willingness to impart it. This does not exclude an active role for man; indeed, in Jonah's own case God did not visibly accomplish Jonah's salvation until after Jonah repented and prayed to God out of the belly of the fish (Jonah 2:1-9a). Faith as a prior condition for salvation in no way diminishes the fact that it is God alone who can effect that salvation.

III. Rebuttal Two: God Need Not Act Unilaterally to Retain His Glory

A second major problem with the standard appeal to God's glory as an argument against Arminianism is that it assumes that God's sovereignty and hence his glory is diminished if he does not act *unconditionally* or *unilaterally*, without any significant involvement whatsoever on the part of man. This assumption, however, is based on a misunderstanding both of the nature of sovereignty and the nature of glory. Let me address these two misunderstandings in turn.

A. The Nature of Sovereignty

Calvinists misconstrue the nature of sovereignty when they restrict its meaning essentially to the unilateral exercise of God's decretive will. Calvinists are motivated to this position in large part by their belief that God's sovereignty and glory would be diminished if the exercise of his will were to be in any way limited or constrained by the free will of other agents, as is the case in the Arminian conception of salvation, according to which God's offer of salvation is conditioned on the human faith response.

However, far from diminishing God's sovereignty, what Arminians recognize as genuine human freedom is in fact the very expression or image of God's sovereignty in man. As Miethe has elegantly phrased it, human freedom is a form of *delegated sovereignty*, "freely given by God to man because we are created in His image" (Terry L. Miethe, "The Universal Power of the Atonement," in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, Pinnock (Ed.), Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1989/1995, p. 74). Human freedom, though indeed a form of sovereignty or power of self-determination, is in terms of its design wholly derived from and reflective of the divine sovereignty (i.e., it is an aspect of the image of God in man), and thus neither diminishes the divine glory nor accrues glory to itself, but rather *reflects glory back upon God, its source*.

While it is true that this God-given capacity for human self-determination places limitations or constraints on the divine will, such limitations, as Cottrell points out, "in no way contradict God's sovereignty, simply because they are *self-limitations*. . . . If they were limitations imposed on God from outside God, then his sovereignty would indeed be compromised. But they are *God's own choice*, and as such are not the negation of sovereignty but the very expression of it. The sovereign God is free to do as he pleases, and this includes the freedom to limit himself" (Jack W. Cottrell, "The Nature of the Divine Sovereignty," in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, Clark Pinnock (Ed.), Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1989/1995, p. 110). The divine sovereignty cannot be threatened by the exercise of human free will so long as the bestowal of that capacity for free will is God's own design and is congruent with his broader purposes.

This does not mean that God never steps in to unilaterally intervene in human affairs; the Bible is clear that he at times (perhaps often) does so in order to ensure that his plans are accomplished. However, "by not intervening in their decisions *unless* his special purposes require it, God respects both the integrity of the freedom he gave to human beings and the integrity of his own sovereign choice to make free creatures in the first place" (ibid, p. 108). God does not need to always so intervene, precisely because many of his plans are conditional with respect to specific events and individual human wills. As Cottrell again comments, the divine plan "contains both conditional and unconditional elements. Regarding the latter, we can say that God has a *specific* purpose for the whole of creation *in general*: to glorify himself and to share his goodness. This could be stated in just the opposite way, namely, that God has a *general* purpose for every *specific part* of his creation (again, to glorify himself and to share his goodness). This and other general elements of the decree are unconditional. But God does not have a specific, unconditional purpose for each discrete particle, object, person, and event within the creation. Most of God's dealings with the specific parts of the universe are conditioned: his foreknowledge is conditioned on the actual occurrence of events themselves (as foreknown); the entire plan of redemption, with all its many elements from Genesis to Revelation, is conditioned on (is a response to) man's sin; acts of judgment and wrath, including hell, are likewise conditioned by sin; answers to prayer are conditioned by the prayers themselves. . . . But in all of this God is *no less sovereign* than if he had unconditionally predetermined each specific component of the whole" (ibid, p. 107).

In a related vein, various Arminian writers have pointed out that it does not represent a moral weakness in God that he is willing to limit himself by allowing humans to exercise authentic free will. As MacDonald reminds us, "Only the great can afford to be vulnerable" (William G. MacDonald, "The Biblical Doctrine of Election," in Pinnock (Ed.), *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1989/1995, p. 213). Moreover, unilaterally realized domination is not necessarily the most highly developed form of influence one can have over others. "The power of tyranny can make people obey on command, but it calls for a higher kind of power to create and work with the delicate flower of human freedom" (Clark Pinnock, "God Limits His Knowledge," in Basinger & Basinger (Eds.), *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom*, Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1986, p. 153). Elsewhere Pinnock elaborates, "By willing the existence of significant beings with independent status alongside of himself, God accepts limitations not imposed from without. In other words, in ruling over the world God is not all-determining but may will to achieve his goals through other agents, accepting the limitations of this decision. Yet this does not make God 'weak,' for it requires more power to rule over an undetermined world than it would over a determined one. Creating free creatures and working with them does not contradict God's omnipotence but requires it. Only omnipotence has the requisite degree and quality of power to undertake such a project" (Clark Pinnock, "Systematic Theology," in Pinnock et. al. (Eds.), *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1994, p. 113).

The Scripture repeatedly emphasizes that God's approach to governance is dramatically different from man's. Jesus stressed to his disciples that they were not to "lord it over" their brethren the way that the "rulers of the Gentiles" do (Mt 20:25; Mk 10:42). Instead, his disciples were to follow the principle that those wishing to be "first" must be "last of all, and servant of all" (Mk 9:35), as Jesus himself had done (Mt 20:28). Indeed, Jesus' whole life was a demonstration of this servant approach to governance. As Fritz Guy forcefully put it, "If Christian theology *really* believes that Jesus the Messiah is the supreme revelation of God, that revelation ought to determine also its understanding of God's governance of the world. To the person who takes seriously Jesus' claim 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9) it is obvious that divine power is expressed not by decreeing and controlling (in the fashion of an ancient despot or a feudal lord), but by self-giving and enabling" (Fritz Guy, "The Universality of God's Love," in Pinnock (Ed.), *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1989/1995, pp. 33-34). The apostle Paul similarly taught that the things considered "foolish" and "weak" by men are often demonstrations of God's wisdom and

strength (1 Cor 1:18-31), the cross of Christ being the prime example of this paradox. "What an astounding way for God to deploy power, in the form of servanthood and self-sacrifice. This was the mode of power God knew in his wisdom to be appropriate for bringing about reconciliation God does not [as a first-resort] overcome his enemies . . . by forcing but by loving them. . . . The question is not whether but in what manner God exercises power" (Clark Pinnock, "Systematic Theology," in Pinnock et. al. (Eds.), *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1994, p. 114). Lest we should think that the ignobility and "weakness" of Christ's cross might mar God's glory, John 21:19 assures us that the death of Christ brought glory to God. Indeed, 1 Pet 4:14-16 suggests that the glory of God is often linked to humiliation and suffering.

To summarize, God chose to limit himself by creating a universe with free agents to whom he responds conditionally. Contrary to what some have charged, this does not contradict or diminish his sovereignty, because it is a self-limitation, one that he sovereignly chose to place on himself. Indeed, human freedom can best be viewed as a form of delegated sovereignty reflecting the image of God (and thereby the glory of God) in man. Moreover, it is important to remember that the divine and human perspectives as to the best way to exercise sovereignty and deploy power are not always the same. In his dealings with men, God often approaches us from a position of vulnerability, relying on the power of loving persuasion rather than preempting all response on our part through unilateral action.

B. The Nature of Glory

The standard argument that Arminianism diminishes God's glory also relies on a misconstrual of the nature of glory itself. A proper understanding of glory must recognize that *glory is a function of merit*; that is, true glory can only be possessed by or ascribed to someone who is *worthy* of it. This observation yields two important consequences, which I will outline below.

1. Divine Glory Is Not Dependent on Unilateral Action

I have just proposed that glory is a function of merit or worth (I will demonstrate this observation from Scripture momentarily). Importantly, it is manifestly not the case that unconditional or unilateral action in and of itself reflects or engenders genuine worth in someone. Consequently, true glory cannot be dependent merely on such action. Consider, for example, the brutal human dictator who unilaterally suppresses all dissent and creates a totalitarian state of fear among his subjects. Though there may be nothing lacking in regard to the unilateral nature of his actions, the only "glory" that he could achieve under those conditions would be a hollow imitation of genuine glory, precisely because such a brutal leader would not *merit* any glory. In contrast, a leader who sets an example and sincerely cares for his followers, promoting their welfare without compromising the integrity of his own character, will likely win the devotion of his followers and possess true glory, whether or not his leadership style is strictly unilateral.

In the same way, God's glory is justified not by the unilateral versus bilateral nature of his actions, but by the *beauty and incomparability of his moral nature*. Though occasionally in Scripture God's glory is associated with the exercise of his dominion or authority (e.g., Jude 25; Rev 1:6; Rev 5:13), in the vast majority of cases God's glory is instead associated with the moral quality of his character, or else with his deeds which express that character. The psalm of Asaph recorded in 1 Chron 16:7-36 is one example. Verse 29 of this psalm states that we are to ascribe glory to God because it is what is "*due His name*" (see also Ps 29:2); that is, we should give God glory because he *merits* it. This is illustrated throughout Asaph's psalm, in which the glory of God is associated with various attributes of his character such as his *holiness* (vs. 10; see also Ps 105:3; Ps 106:47; Is 6:3; Rev 15:4), his *power or strength* (vs. 28; see also Ps 24:8; Ps 29; Ps 63:2; Ps 66:2-3; Ps 145:11-12; Mt 6:13; Mt 24:30; Eph 3:20-21; 2 Thess 1:9; Rev 4:11), and his *love* (vss. 34-35; see also Ps 108:4-5; John 1:14; Eph 1:6; 2 Pet 3:18). Similarly, in Romans 1:23 the "glory of the incorruptible God" which men are said to have knowingly abandoned is characterized in vs. 20 in terms of what is evident about

his "invisible *attributes*, his eternal *power* and divine *nature*." In Psalm 115:1 the psalmist declares: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory *because of Thy lovingkindness, because of Thy truth*." Elsewhere in Scripture the glory of God is associated with his greatness (Dt 5:24), his righteousness (Ps 97:6; Is 24:16; Rom 3:23), his compassion and humility (Ps 102:12-17; Ps 113; Ps 138:5-6; Rom 9:23), his truth (Rom 3:7), his wisdom as displayed in the plan of redemption (Rom 11:33-36; Rom 16:25-27), his eternal, immortal, and invisible nature (1 Tim 1:17), his excellence (2 Pet 1:3), his mercy and willingness to save (Is 44:22-23; Is 46:13; Rom 15:9; Rev 19:1), and his "wonderful deeds" which he alone can accomplish and which exhibit his character (1 Chron 16:24; Ps 96:3; Ps 19:1; Ps 66:2-3; Ps 72:18-19; Ps 104:31; John 17:4). In terms of the human response to God's character, to glorify God is associated with the fear of God (Rev 11:13; 14:7) and repentance, or the recognition of God's righteousness in judging man's sin (Rev 16:9). In all of these passages, God's glory is characterized as a reflection of and response to the merit or worth of his incomparable nature, not as something deriving from unilateral action on his part.

Even in the extended passage found in Isaiah chapters 40-66, which presents perhaps the most exalted portrayal of the sovereign God in all of Scripture, God's glory is grounded in his incomparable nature, in particular as expressed by his willingness to justify his people. Consider the following excerpt from Isaiah 45:21b-25:

"... there is *no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior*; there is *none except Me*. 22 *Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth*; for I am God, and there is *no other*. 23 I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in *righteousness* and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. 24 They will say of Me, 'Only in the Lord are *righteousness and strength*.' Men will come to Him, and all who were angry at Him shall be put to shame. 25 In the Lord all *the offspring of Israel will be justified, and will glory*."

In this passage it is God's incomparable righteousness and willingness to save that form the basis for his glory, not any commitment to unilateral, unconditional action toward humanity. Note too that the strong declaration of sovereignty in vs. 22 ("I am God, and there is no other") is immediately (and tellingly) preceded by a manifestly conditional offer: "Turn to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth." This passage and other passages that link God's glory to the exercise of his dominion or sovereignty (e.g., Jude 25; Rev 1:6; Rev 5:13) do not entail that God's dominion must be exercised unilaterally, completely unconditioned on human responses. As mentioned earlier, there are various ways that a ruler can exercise dominion, and unilateral action need not be the exclusive or even primary methodology for government within a sovereign state. God can be sovereign and yet still work conditionally and responsively with human freedom.

Isaiah 48:11 might seem to be a glaring exception that establishes God's glory on the basis of unilateral action:

"For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; for how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another."

However, a close look at the context of this verse suggests a different interpretation. In this passage God has berated the Israelites for their stubborn disobedience (vs. 4), they who are known by his name (vss. 1-2) and who thus are in a position to soil his reputation. In vs. 11 God informs the Israelites of his intention to intervene so as ultimately to secure their deliverance (vs. 20) and prevent his name from being further profaned by their actions. The "(an)other" of vs. 11 with whom God says he will not share his glory refers primarily to the idols and images mentioned in vs. 5, to which Israel had been appealing instead of to the true God. Verse 11, then, is not a statement of principle that God must necessarily act unilaterally in order to maintain his glory. Rather, this verse expresses God's desire that the Israelites recognize *why* it is that he will act to secure their deliverance--it is not because Israel deserves it. Moreover, the deliverance will not be accomplished by the graven images to which Israel prays. It is instead the true God, and no other, who will bring deliverance, and he will do

so for the sake of his own reputation, not for Israel's (or for that of Israel's false gods).

Glory, then, is associated in the Bible not with unilateral action but with a meritorious character expressed in meritorious deeds. This observation disarms the Calvinist contention that God's glory would be diminished if he were to condition his willingness to effect salvation on the faith response of humans. God need not act unilaterally or unconditionally in order to maintain his glory.

2. Humans Cannot Share in the Glory for Effecting Their Salvation

There is one other very important consequence of the observation that glory is a function of merit. Not only does this mean that God's glory cannot be diminished merely by his making salvation conditional on the human faith response (i.e., by God's acting in a non-unilateral manner), it also means that *humans cannot share in the glory for effecting their salvation*, precisely because *no person merits his salvation even to the least extent*. The only way that humans could somehow share the glory with God for their salvation would be if they *merited* such glory by virtue of having contributed a meritorious act or acts that would assist in effecting their salvation. The Bible is clear, however, that no one can merit salvation on the basis of works (e.g., Rom 3:20; Gal 3:11). Moreover, the act of faith on which salvation is conditioned contributes no saving merit to the sinner's record, neither does the faith act in itself in any way *effect* one's salvation (as was argued earlier), for God alone can effect salvation. Thus, there is no basis on which the believer can share the glory with God for bringing about his salvation. Because we do not merit it, we cannot share in the glory for it, thus God's glory is in no way diminished.

IV. Rebuttal Three: Human Free Will Increases the Profundity of Glory

I have one final rebuttal to make to the charge that Arminians diminish God's glory by positing genuinely free human agency. It is this: Far from diminishing God's glory, the exercise of authentic free will on the part of humans carries the potential to actually *increase* the profundity of God's glory. To understand why this is so, it is important to first understand the two distinct perspectives from which the Bible views the divine glory: (a) as something that God possesses *inherently*, and (b) as something that is *ascribed* to God by other sentient beings. Both senses of the term are important. It is true, first, that God would possess glory whether or not he had ever created other beings to behold his glory. And yet it is equally true that God delights in his glory being recognized and thus magnified by his creatures. This is what it means to *glorify* God or to *ascribe glory* to him. The Bible speaks of this in numerous passages, as in Psalm 29:1-2 where we are instructed, "Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name."

Now the question arises, "In what way can glory be ascribed to God?" Certainly one answer is that glory can be ascribed through verbal praise and adoration, and this is perhaps what we most often think of when we think of giving glory to God. There are, however, nonverbal ways of glorifying God as well, and it may be these ways that are the deeper and more profound. In 1 Corinthians 6:20, for example, Paul speaks of the necessity of glorifying God "in your body" through a lifestyle of sexual purity and holiness. In John 21:19 it is stated that Jesus' sacrificial death was an act that glorified God (cf. Phlp 1:20). In 1 Corinthians 10:31, Paul makes the sweeping statement, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or *whatever* you do, *do all to the glory of God*." The conclusion is obvious: every act of sincere obedience by a believer serves to glorify God, as does every sacrifice made for the Lord's sake. Why is this so? Because such acts of obedience and sacrifice flow from one's inward loyalty to Christ, and express one's faith in and love for Christ. It is this inward sense of loyalty that is so precious, because it is at its root a recognition of the unlimited worth and glory of God vis-a-vis the relative insignificance of what is being voluntarily given up for God's sake in the act of obedience. The greater the sacrifice on man's part, the greater God's glory is magnified by the act of obedience in question. The greatest possible sacrifice is to give up one's life (John 15:13). Indeed, it may well be that a million choruses of verbal praise do not equal the weight of glory ascribed to God by one act of martyrdom. That act shouts out,

"You, O Lord, are worthy to receive the sacrifice of my most precious possession--my life--which I willingly give up for you."

Now for my main point: It seems to me that these acts of obedience and sacrifice acquire their extraordinary force and significance precisely because they are free and voluntary acts, initiated by human agents for the purpose of glorifying God. It does *not* strengthen the force of these acts to view them as the Calvinist does as originating within God's determinative decree, such that the human agent could not have chosen otherwise than to make the sacrifice in question. If anything, viewing these acts as the Calvinist does actually *decreases* their value insofar as contributing to the glory of God, for on a Calvinist understanding the acts become motions within a divinely orchestrated script over which the human actors have no *ultimate* control (see the essay "[Philosophical Reflections on Free Will](#)"). Only the Arminian view, which recognizes authentically free human agency, provides a sufficient context in which to understand how human acts of obedience and sacrifice are able to magnify God's glory as they do. Thus, it seems to me that the hypothesis of genuine human agency posited by Arminians does not diminish, but rather increases the profundity of God's glory.

V. Summary

In this essay I have presented a three-point rebuttal to the claim that Arminian theology detracts from the glory of God. First, I argued that Arminians fully recognize that it is God alone who effects salvation. Faith as a condition on salvation arising from human agency in no way detracts from this fact, for faith cannot mechanically effect salvation, nor is God bound by any factors beyond his own character to effect man's salvation. Salvation is accomplished solely by the power of God, and no one can wrest salvation from God apart from his willingness to impart it.

Second, I argued that Calvinists err in rigidly associating the divine glory with unilateral or unconditional action on God's part. I argued that Calvinists' error in this regard is based on two misunderstandings: a misunderstanding of the nature of divine sovereignty and a misunderstanding of the nature of divine glory. Regarding divine sovereignty, I followed Jack Cottrell in noting that God may respond conditionally to humans and thus limit the exercise of his will without contradicting his absolute sovereignty because such limitations are sovereignly *self-imposed* by God. As Terry Miethe has pointed out, human freedom is a form of *delegated* sovereignty, the capacity for which, I argued, reflects glory back upon God its source. I further noted, following several Arminian writers, that God often approaches humans from a position of vulnerability, relying on the power of loving persuasion rather than preempting all response on our part through unilateral action. In regard to divine glory, I argued that glory is a function of *merit*, and I presented a brief survey of scriptures showing that divine glory is accordingly associated in the Bible not with unilateral action on God's part but with his incomparably meritorious character expressed in meritorious deeds. I concluded from this and related observations that God need not act unilaterally in order to maintain his glory, and that his glory is thus not diminished by making salvation conditional on the human faith response. I further concluded that humans cannot share in the glory for effecting their salvation precisely because they in no sense merit salvation, thus neither do they merit any glory for their salvation. This is true even if God's willingness to effect salvation is conditioned on their faith response, as Arminians contend.

Finally, I argued that only Arminianism provides a sufficient context in which to understand how human acts of obedience and sacrifice magnify the glory of God. Such acts glorify God by virtue of being free and voluntary expressions of loyalty to him. Yet, Calvinism undercuts the force of these acts by viewing all human intentions and actions as being products of a determinative divine decree. Arminianism, far from diminishing the glory of God, actually increases the profundity of God's glory by recognizing that acts of obedience and sacrifice are expressions of authentically free human agency.

Note 1:

It is important to note that this essay examines only the issue of whether Arminian

theology diminishes the glory of God as Calvinists have claimed. I do not here address the larger question of whether Arminianism or Calvinism is better supported in Scripture. That question will, it is hoped, be the subject of several future essays.