“Are Calvinism and Arminianism Both Biblical?”

Calvinism and Arminianism: is either one Biblical? Can they both be Biblical? Should the differences between Arminian and Calvinistic theology really be of that great of concern as long as both teach that the Lord is sovereign and we are all sinners and the only way to the Lord is through Jesus Christ and the atoning sacrifice He made on the cross?

You ask a very good question and (of course) who you ask will determine the sort of answer you receive. Yes; many Calvinists view Arminianism as “false doctrine” and are often very condescending in the way they discuss it. □(□□Of course, Arminians are also quite capable of being condescending toward Calvinists too.) Personally, I think this is unfortunate. This is a very important discussion and the competing viewpoints definitely have something to learn from each other.

Regarding your question, both perspectives view themselves as perfectly “biblical.” Adherents of either system will want to affirm that their view is most consistent with the teaching of Scripture. If they thought otherwise, they would change their view.

Of course, both systems cannot be correct in all the details (though they could both be wrong in *some* of the details). In this sense, they cannot both be “biblical” in the sense that they both get everything right according to Scripture. The disagreements between the two systems are significant and they cannot both be right in all the particular views that they affirm (although they could both be wrong in certain respects).

The differences should concern us (even though there is much in which both systems would agree). The differences are

significant. Calvinists deny libertarian freedom; Arminians affirm it. Calvinists embrace a different definition of "total depravity" than Arminians. Both groups disagree about the nature of election, the extent of the atonement, and whether or not a true believer can lose his/her salvation. These differences (and others as well) are significant enough to be of concern to all true believers.

At any rate, this is a huge and complex issue (as you've probably come to see). Let me conclude by recommending what I consider to be a really great book that deals with these issues (although the author takes something of a "mediating" position between the two). The book is called *Salvation and Sovereignty: A Molinist Approach*. It is written by the Baptist theologian Kenneth Keathley and was published in 2010. You can find the book on Amazon.

Keathley's book is one you definitely want to read if you're concerned about these issues. Personally, I think his particular version of a "Molinist" approach offers the best way out of the labyrinth. I hope you find it helpful.

Shalom in Christ,

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