

The Calvinist – Arminian Debate

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Dedication

In the study of theology, a person is always dependent on teachers who lead him into the depths and intricacies of the subject. My instructors have been of great help by continually challenging each question of theology and philosophy in light of the teaching of the Bible. Theology must always be correctable as our understanding of the Word of God is improved. The essential doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ shines clear. But our understanding of the details of this doctrine have been varied. My thanks go to Doctors Kenneth Kantzer, Robert Culver, and Malcom Cronk. They have led me continually to the Scriptures. This book reflects my conclusions, not theirs.

Note

Some book, article, and scripture passages are quoted at length if it helps understand the context which is being discussed.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of salvation is central to understanding the purpose of men on earth. Yet literally thousands of books, from dozens of positions, have been written to explain the Bible's teaching on this doctrine. The Bible's simple teaching of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ becomes so complex in the hands of theologians that we no longer attempt to teach it to laymen. And if we do try to teach it, the format and style of the presentation is usually so artificial and impractical that relevance is lost.

However, there is no single teaching of scripture which should so inflame our hearts and minds as the doctrine of salvation. The church has no more important theme to share with the world than the message of salvation in Christ. Believers have no more joyful topic of meditation and conversation than the risen Savior and our fellowship with Him. Properly developed, the teaching of the doctrine of salvation should reflect the simplicity of biblical faith and the excitement which comes from the confirming witness of the Holy Spirit.

There are four major claimants within Protestantism to the role of correct systematizer of the Bible's teaching concerning salvation: Lutherans, Calvinists, Arminians (Wesleyans), and Anglicans. The two theological positions which will be examined here have been developed as Reformed (Calvinism) and Arminian theology. There are numerous points of theological reflection in these two positions but this study will center on one overarching issue - the doctrine of salvation.

There are many other claimants to the position of interpreter of the Bible's teaching regarding salvation. Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, the Church of the East, Monophysitism, Lutheranism, and Anglicanism claim to teach an orthodox doctrine. However,

each one of these positions rejects or in some major way modifies (usually concerning the means of grace) the teaching of salvation by grace through faith alone.

The standard for comparison and critique will be the Bible. Therefore, before getting deeply into the historical controversy, I will develop an overall biblical doctrine of salvation in Chapters Two and Three. The outcome of the study will be a clearer presentation of the doctrine of salvation organized in such a way that it can be easily communicated, yet so biblical that it is not already prejudicial to one position or the other.

The desire the present writer has coincides with Richard Watson's:

This controversy has always been conducted with ardour, and sometimes with intemperance. I shall endeavor to consider such parts of it as are comprehended in the question before us, with perfect calmness and fairness; recollecting, on the one hand, how many have attempted this, and on the other, that while all honour is due to great names, the plain and unsophisticated sense of the word of inspired truth must alone decide on a subject with respect to which it is not silent.¹

¹ Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes*. (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855), p. 284.

Chapter 2

SALVATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A. The Doctrine of Salvation in the Old Testament

1. Introduction

The theme of salvation is the key to the Bible. God created man good. But by a conscious act of sin man fell from his standing with God. From Genesis 3 through Revelation the great theme is the reestablishment of a good relationship with the living God. This reestablishing is accomplished through salvation. The focal points of this salvation are: 1) our relationship with the Savior, and 2) the process of salvation, from the first drawing of the Spirit to the completion of our maturity in glory.

Thus the whole pre-Christian history of salvation is a guiding of mankind to the Redeemer of the world. The people of Israel were prepared in advance by historical revelation; the peoples of the world by the happenings of politics and civilization.

The Old Testament is promise and expectation, the New is fulfillment and completion. The Old is the marshaling of the hosts to the battle of God, the New is the Triumph of the Crucified One. The Old is the twilight and dawn of morning, the New is the rising sun and the height of eternal day. (Sauer, 1952, p. 186)

The connection between the testaments, therefore, has to do with the promise of a Savior and salvation, and the fulfillment of that promise.

Many writers have chosen different themes as the central point of the Scripture. Most themes concern the relation between the two testaments of God. The theme is given to clarify the nature of salvation before and after the coming of Jesus Christ. J. B. Payne tells of nine

points of connection.

We may, however, consider the following nine lines of connection between the two Testaments. They are: A) reference to Scripture (Scriptural proof); B) typology; C) words and their meanings; D) the relation of full parity within the unity of divine revelation; E) the relation in which the Old Testament is viewed as the historical and theological preparation for the gospel; F) the relation in which the Old Testament is understood as a propaedeutic to the gospel in terms of the dialectic of law and the gospel; G) promise and fulfillment; H) unity of perspective, and I) continuity and discontinuity. (Payne, 1970, p. 282)

Thus the point of connection, or the theme of the Bible, is defined in terms of one of these points.

Other writers, however, see the above points as only partial indicators of an underlying central theme. In the hermeneutics of the Bible this central theme which links all other points together is called the analogy of faith. We can get at this central theme by asking a question: Is there any one theme which is so central and so comprehensive that all other points are made clear and interrelated on this one common basis?

Through David, the Holy Spirit first revealed the truth of the eternal agreement that was established between Yahweh, the Father, and the Messiah, His Son, which is often called the "covenant of redemption ." This covenant constitutes, in fact the basis for the subsequent testament made between God and elect of mankind. In this original agreement between Yahweh and the Messiah, the latter, as "the last Adam," undertook both to earn salvation for mankind under the covenant of works and also to give Himself as the ransom for the sins of which the elect should become guilty. (Payne, 1962, 275)

This witness to an eternal covenant appears in the New Testament in Ephesians 3:11 and Hebrews 13:20. If it is correct that the revelation of the eternal covenant did not take place until the time of David, was there any indicator prior to that time of God's gracious provision of salvation? If there is to be a true analogy of faith applying to all the Bible there must be a prior witness. "God deals with His people in both testaments on the basis of a single promise."(Kaiser, 1970, p. 147) This single promise is first found revealed in the same context as the fall - Genesis 3:15.

In order to properly lay a foundation for the theology of salvation in the Old Testament, based on this gracious promise of God, it is necessary to study various doctrines related to the theme of salvation and draw our decision-making data from the Bible.

2. Sin and Guilt

The Old Testament is clear as to man's responsibility in the matter of sin. In Genesis 3 when challenged by God both the man and the woman replied, "I ate." God then said, "Because you have done this ..." Sin (rebellion and disobedience to God) was real and guilt was real. The man and the woman were punished for their sin. The awful nature of sin is apparent from the nature of the punishment.

God had declared that on the day man sinned he would die. The punishment on the day of sin was separation from God. Such separation from one's creator in life, subsequent physical death, and eventual eternal separation, are the consequence of sin. This includes both the legal aspects and the actual or lived aspects.

Guilt in the Bible is never merely a feeling of the conscience. It is rather a judicial thing, an official state of affairs. The guilt described in the Scripture is the guilt of the courtroom, where it is always obligation to suffer punishment.

(Culver, 1968, p. 7).

The question of how God will deal with such official, personal guilt and the sin nature which led to acts of sin is the question of salvation. "The two great passages on the doctrine of sin in the Old Testament are Psalm 32 and Ezekiel 18."(Kaiser, 1970, p. 140) Psalm 32 uses the words transgression, sin, iniquity, and guilt. David is aware of his sin. He knows he cannot hide it from God. But, "God, it is clear, cannot be defeated by the evil in David's life. He uses it, molds it, despite man's sin, to accord with his purpose."(Achte-meier, 1962, p. 97) God uses even David's sin for good. He is sovereign. Thus the outcome is forgiveness (verse 5) by means of justification (verse 2). Sin is dealt with as to its legal nature. When the legal aspect is completed then the sinner stands forgiven. Ezekiel 18 restates the basic warning of actual/personal consequences from Genesis 2 - the person who sins will die (verse 4). It further states that God does not take pleasure in the death of the sinner, rather God wishes that he may live (verse 23).

Repentance and seeking the Lord are the means from sin to salvation. "Repent and turn away from all your transgressions" (Ezekiel 18:30). The conclusion then, is that sin is actual/personal and legal. It causes the punishment of separation from God. But this separation can be overcome and salvation is possible. There are situations in which all Israel is held guilty. But that national guilt is because of the individual sins of masses of people, or because of the sins of the leaders.

3. Grace in the Old Testament

All men have sinned. They have sinned because they are sinners. God has been just and, in relation to his Holiness, has condemned all men. Since men continue to be sinners they will continue to sin. Therefore, if there is to be a salvation, it must be initiated by God Himself. This sovereignty in redemption is seconded by other writers.

"In the thought of the Old Testament salvation is affected by no human act, but by God alone." (Rowley, 1946, 156) However, I believe that the origin of the history of salvation goes back beyond David and Abraham to Adam in Genesis 3:15.

The history of the people having thus shown that they had failed at the present stage of revelation to attain that righteousness which avails before God, and to realize the purpose of their election, the conviction forced itself on the mind that a new dispensation of grace is needed; in other words, that God must of His own free grace blot out transgression, and, as the passage Deut. 30:6 shows, effect by a new communication of life that conformity to His will which the law demands.

(Oehler, n.d., 457)

This failure to attain righteousness, the righteousness of God, began with Adam and Eve. Thus the working of God to save men (a dispensation) begins with Adam and must proceed on the basis of grace.

Two schools of thought exist concerning the relation between The Old Testament and the New Testament. One sees the grace of God remaining constant throughout the history of mankind. A second school sees God operating in the Old Testament on the basis of works or tests by which He accepts only those who turn to Him in response to the tests. "Both teach that Old Testament salvation is by grace. But the difference comes because they explain the grace differently and they both see the object of faith as a different object." (Kaiser, 1970, p. 149)

The continuity school says the object of faith is Christ in both testaments. The discontinuity school believes the basis of faith in the Old Testament is God's requirement of sacrifices and offerings, i.e. obedience to the cultus.

But the Old Testament purports to be neither the book of Jewish history only nor

a collection of pious and moral narratives, but the testimony of the holy Spirit to the sins of men--of all men--and to the grace of God which pardons the repentant, believing sinner. For our own salvation and blessing, it desires to tell us how cowards and liars, perjurers and murderers and sinners alike came to a halt at the call of God, and began a new life in the ways of God. (Sauer, 1952, p. 151)

God began this offer and provision with Adam. He deepens it in the covenant with Abraham when He points to both the nature of the proclamation -through you, all the nations- and the nature of the salvation -shall be blessed. Thus salvation by the grace of God comes through the Jews to all men (cf. Ex. 19:6). Continuity of the plan of salvation and unity of the process is a conclusion drawn from the reality of an eternal covenant of redemption, as well as from the testimony of Scripture. Romans 4 and Galatians 3 confirm our understanding of salvation by grace in the Old Testament. Payne concludes,

The fundamental recourse of men under the "law" was to grace, as they appealed to God's undeserved mercy, especially as it had been shown to their patriarchal ancestors (Ex. 32:13; 33:13,14). All success, moreover, was seen as the direct result of the work of the Lord (Deut. 21:3,4). (1962, p. 235)

This is spoken of by many of the characters of the Old Testament. David in Psalm 51 announces that the removal of sin is because of God's love and compassion (verse 1). Jonah expresses similar knowledge of God's love in 4:2.

Grace in the Old Testament is not limited to the Jewish people. But the nations also are to be blessed. For God is not the God of the Jews only, but also of the nations (see Rom. 3:29). Israelitish prophecy sees the nations as one family, and all nations partake together of the Messianic salvation. Therefore will the Lord

one day "destroy the veil which veils all the peoples, and the covering which covers all nations" (Isa. 25:7). Then will the peoples as peoples be converted (Jer. 3:17; Zech. 8:20-27; Sam. 2:3; Mich. 4:2; Isa. 42:4), and for the first time in history there will be Christian nations and races in the sense of the Holy Scripture.(Sauer, 1952, p. 154)

The Jews are to be recipients of God's grace and messengers to convey that grace. Grace, then, is God's response to sin. Man eternally lost any right to proper standing before God. "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, saved us" (Ephesians 2:4) acted for us when we could not act. This is grace.

4. Election

The Old Testament does not deal at length with the doctrines of the application of redemption. One of the five doctrines which is presented is election. Were we to examine only the Old Testament the Calvinist-Arminian controversy would not have arisen. There is too little material. Most references to election concern God's choice of individuals to fulfill a role in the ongoing work of salvation.

Abraham is a good example of election. He was, like us all, a sinner. But he was a man who trusted God. Nor was he alone. The text records him worshiping with Melchizedek, who was a priest of God. Job also lived at approximately the same time. But God In His sovereignty chose to give the covenant to Abraham.

David, in 2 Samuel 7, is another example of election. David is greatly surprised to receive the promise of God from Nathan. David has done nothing to deserve this eternal covenant. But God freely, out of love, gave the covenant to David.

5. Propitiation

Propitiation is the averting of the divine wrath. God has no choice, due to His holiness and justice, but to condemn men and eventually to punish them for their sins. Thus men are presently under the judgment of wrath. Salvation includes the turning aside of that wrath. Christ, our substitute, bore the punishment for us. In doing so God is now free to act in accordance with His love and save humanity. The propitiation accomplishes a number of things.

There must be divine propitiation, not simply to open a way by which men may approach God in fellowship, but first of all to satisfy heavenly justice through a payment that will free man from the penalty that his failures are due (cf. Num 35:31). He must present the kofer (the ransom) to padha (to redeem) his life (Ex. 21:30). Then it is that he will find forgiveness (Lev. 4:20) and that the way to divine fellowship will be open. As a final requirement, however, the kofer must be constituted an adequate one (cf. II Sam. 24:24). (Payne, 1962, p. 251)

This is purely of grace as God in love reaches out to us through Christ. In Christ the wrath of God was poured out completely. God reckoned the sins that were ours to Christ, and punished Him in our place. Because of the helplessness of man, God is the initiator in propitiation. Apart from the grace of God no one would even seek a means of escape by grace. Psalm 14:1-3 says,

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds. There is no one who does good. The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one."

In the last analysis, "it must be God who propitiates Himself (Ps. 65:3; 79:9); for God 'to

atone' thus comes to mean 'to pardon' (2 Chron. 31:18; Ps. 78:38; cf. Jer. 18:23)”

As God chooses to save men and makes propitiation, so man receives salvation, and by faith specific results take place.

6. The Nature of Faith

God provides salvation by means of His own grace and because of His love. Does He require anything of man? The answer must be yes, God requires faith. Both testaments call upon man to believe God's promise that He will provide a proper sacrifice as the ground of forgiveness. This believing is termed faith. "The condition of God's salvation is ever surrender to His lordship and complete reliance on Him."(Achte-meier, 1970, p. 129)

Is this act of faith a work of man? Does the believer deserve salvation because of his faith? No, "My believing is not a work. This is passive action. It is stretching my hand to grab the gift. It is not the ground of the gift."(Kaiser, 1970, p. 151) Neither then is faith a ground of salvation (justification) nor a means of demanding salvation. Rather to the Jew, "their part is an unconditional surrender to whatever might be the will of God, their Absolute Ruler."(Morris, 1969, p. 73) Faith is a simple tool by which one receives the salvation God offers.

But if salvation is by faith and that faith is present in the Old Testament, was the Jew conscious of a present salvation? Was there in the Old Testament a sense of freedom in relationship and adoption as children of God? Was faith actually operative in response to grace? Yes. The Old Testament believer lived in the understanding, as well as the blessing, of faith. This is reflected in each segment of Israelite history.

Israel did not derive its knowledge of God first and foremost from nature, as the ancient oriental peoples did, but from the acts of God in the history of the people as they appeared in the light of his revelation to Moses and the prophets. So

Israel's faith sprang from two sources: a spiritual and a historical source. God is not a mode of being, but a personal Power who consciously works salvation in this world. (Vriezen, 1954, p. 20)

We shall look at specific instances of this saving grace by faith. Abraham is an outstanding example of grace by faith in the time of the Patriarchs.

It was a faith with significance for the whole history of salvation, a faith for the future. Abraham embraced the promise not only for himself but also for his bodily and spiritual descendants. Thus he became, though at first the "one" (Mal. 2:15; Ezek. 33:24; Heb. 11:12), nevertheless the ancestor of the "many" (Ezek. 33:34), indeed, the "father of all believers" (Rom. 4:11). (Sauer, 1952, p. 89)

Abraham's faith stands throughout the remainder of the Scriptures as a symbol to all men. This faith not only brought salvation, it also helped Abraham to live in the present with hope for the future.

A further function exercised by faith in the religious life of the patriarchs was that it spiritualized their attitude towards the promises. This was brought about in the following way: God not only reserved to Himself the fulfillment, but also refrained from giving the promises their divine fulfillment during the lives of the patriarchs. Thus Abraham learned to possess the promises of God, in the promising God, alone. (Vos, 1968, pp. 100-101)

God Himself is known by the walk of faith. As God is known and encountered faith becomes a living dialogue within a new relationship. The fall is not nullified, but the fallen situation is rectified. Man now walks with God. The law, given at the time of Moses, was also to be received by faith and lived by faith.

Meanwhile the just walked in faith and had life therein. The law, by always pointing back to God's electing grace, and onward to God's just retribution, as the foundation of the righteousness of the law, presupposes faith, i.e. such a trusting submission to the covenant-God as was exhibited in Abraham's believing adherence to the Divine promise. (Oehler, n.d., p. 459)

As the Jew sought God through the Mosaic Law he was led to faith. The prophets also walked by faith. They had the example of the patriarchs and the men of Israel. And they also had the direction of the law. Their response is faith.

It is the genius of the classical prophets, a genius born of their knowledge of God, that they apprehend what constitutes true surrender to the Lord. ... They know surrender to the Lord to be a matter of inward, intimate relationship to a personal God. In a man's heart and will and motivation the prophets find the source of religion, and it is an inward surrender manifested in outward faithfulness to the Lord which the prophets ask of their people. (Achtmeier, 1962, p. 115)

This is most clearly seen in some specific passages. Isaiah 7:9 says, "If you will not believe, you surely will not be established." What is this belief?

Negatively speaking, it is a ceasing from all natural confidence in one's own strength and power, and renunciation of all trust in human on support and assistance. Accordingly Jeremiah thus describes unbelief, 17:5: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm" (which was just what Ahaz had done). Positively, it is a fastening or leaning; for this is the proper meaning of 77 namely a fastening (staying (Ges) of the heart upon the word of promise, a leaning upon the power and faithfulness of God, by reason of which He can and

will effect what He chooses. (Oehler, n.d., p. 459)

Thus the prophets as well as the patriarchs and the law see faith as the outward means to receive God's blessing and to walking continually in it.

7. Forgiveness

Forgiveness and peace comes to us through the salvation achieved by God's messiah. This experience of salvation gives peace of mind concerning individual sins, and concerning the whole standing of the sinful person before God. Feelings of love and gratitude to God, who has thus forgiven us are aroused within us and we experience the assistance of the Spirit who creates faith within man. This forgiveness is illustrated throughout the Old Testament.

The key to understanding forgiveness is in its origin. The origin is the love of God. This is clearly illustrated in the New Testament (Ephesians 1; 3; 1 Peter 2), but it is just as clear in the Old Testament. "The best place to note forgiveness in the Old Testament is Exodus 34:6 and nine other passages where it announces God is very merciful and full of loving-kindness and willing to take care of humanities' offenses." (Kaiser, 1970, p. 154)

"After the Sinaiic testament had been enacted, forgiveness was shown to be obtainable upon men's repentance; but the penalty for had still to be exacted (Ex. 34:6,7; cf. Num. 14:20-23). (Payne, 1962, p. 248)

Such forgiveness is seen in the prophets as well. Isaiah 33:24; Jeremiah 31:34; 36:3; Daniel 9:9 are clear that forgiveness is found in God and that He desires to forgive. Isaiah 55 is one of many instances where the word "forgive" does not occur, but is clearly proclaimed. The Jews had despaired of finding forgiveness. They were hopelessly lost in sin. Then God in grace offered salvation. "The text (Isa. 55) teaches the whole grace of God in the fact that He is able to do precisely what we thought He was not able to do." (Kaiser, 1970, p. 140) In fact, in the twenty-

five references to forgiveness (salah) in the Old Testament in each case God is the author or giver of forgiveness.

8. Regeneration

The personal aspect of the doctrine of the application of redemption is regeneration. This is taught in the Old Testament with the words "a new heart" and "a new life". This phrase occurs as early as 1 Samuel 10:9 when God gave Saul a new heart. Burrows comments,

The idea of a new heart appears in I Sam. 10:9, an especially striking instance because the passage is part of a very ancient narrative of the beginning of the monarchy. The account seems to indicate a real conversion--not merely the enthusiasm of the ecstatic prophets Saul meets, but also an inner spiritual experience which fits him to rule as Yahweh's anointed. (Quoted in Payne, 1962, p. 242)

This phrase occurs in the same historical context with David. In Psalm 51:10 David prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." This call for renewal is in light of the new heart within David. He has, as a believer, transgressed God's law. He desires a fresh experience of cleansing and calls upon God to renew the creation.

Christ stated that "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." (John 8:56) Jesus said that "no man comes to the Father, but by me." (John 14:6) Since the Old Testament saints did come to the Father (Ps. 73:24), they must have come in and through Christ.

In the time of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, each man refers to this regenerative process. Payne comments on Isaiah's declaration,

Isaiah became, moreover, the first prophet explicitly to reveal the hope of a national regeneration of Israel at the coming of the testament of peace. Then at

last "the Spirit will be poured upon us from on high" (32:15) and the Lord will "wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion" (4:4). Joel went on to speak of others also (Gentiles?) as being among the saved people of God. (Payne, 1962, p. 243)

Thus the Lord, the Spirit, is the cleansing one who gives a new heart to His new people.

Jeremiah not only speaks of the regeneration of Jews he also spoke of Gentiles. He states that they will also be converted.

As stated elsewhere, those whom He regenerates will surely demonstrate their new heart by conscious conversion, "becoming a fruitful field" (Isa. 32:15). Just so, Jeremiah's new testament emphasizes the fact that "they shall all know Me" (Jer. 31:34), which again describes the active response of loving human hearts. (Payne, 1962, p. 244)

There is equal testimony to the origin of salvation in God and the responsibility of man to believe. The work of God the Spirit is to regenerate, or give a new nature (heart) to the believer.

Conclusion

There is, we have seen, eloquent testimony to the principle of salvation by faith in the Old Testament. There is also considerable Old Testament evidence to substantiate the major doctrines in the general area of salvation (election, propitiation, regeneration, etc.). The conclusion, then, is that the Old Testament is in specific agreement with the doctrines of salvation as usually developed in the New Testament. But an equal question to the presence of these doctrines is the question of overall formulation of a systematic plan of the theology of salvation.

B. The Theology of Salvation in the Old Testament

1. Introduction. The promise of eventual triumph through a human-God-savior was first given in Genesis 3 at the time of the fall. God's answer to the fall of man, with its eternal consequences, was to give a promise of restoration to fellowship with Himself. This promise was to be effected through a savior who would bring victory over the evil one. This theme of restoration to a personal relationship with God through a savior is the central theme of the entire scriptural revelation. The New Testament writers refer to this overall theme as "the promise" more than 52 times.

How is this theme developed? Is it in fact central in the whole of Old Testament theology? Can it be traced through various Old Testament times and writers? How do the statements concerning salvation by faith relate to the whole cultic material (sacrifices, offerings, ceremonial laws, temple worship, etc.)? How do the tenses of the words connected to the promise, the Messiah, and the covenants relate to redemption? These are questions will be discuss in this section.

2. The Promise. The concept of "the promise" as a major theme of Old and New Testament organization of theology is not new. The term occurs on an average of twice per book in the New Testament. The Old Testament references use the formula "I will be your God, and you will be my people and I will dwell in your midst". This occurs as a formula referring back to the original promise of restoration to fellowship with God as given in Genesis 3.15. When God cursed man at the fall, He also promised victory over Satan through the seed of the woman. This seed would be a human (seed of woman) and would be the savior.

Some writers (Kaiser, Beecher, Sauer, Payne, Hengstenberg) maintain that there was also a clear awareness that this would be God Himself, incarnate for the purpose of salvation. The Hebrew of Genesis 4:1 substantiates this interpretation. In literal translation Eve says, "I have

gotten a man-child, even the Lord." English textual editors seem to feel compelled to add, "with the help of" or "from" the Lord. Most are forthright enough to put the additional words in italics. Translations into other languages do not always include the "helpful" editorial words. In the simple Hebrew there is an affirmation of Eve's faith in God's promise of the coming Messiah. God said her seed would defeat Satan; this is her seed; therefore, this child will defeat Satan and God will become victorious and restore Adam and Eve. Thus Genesis 3:15 is the first instance of the promise--God Himself will come and save man from sin and establish Himself as Lord over all. "Thus the first word of promise is at once the most comprehensive and the deepest. In it is hidden the whole history and order of salvation." (Sauer, 1952, p. 60) Payne comments concerning the promise,

This is attested by the Old Testament itself (Josh. 21:45; 23:14; Ps. 105:8-11; etc.), but the scope of the promise is especially evident in the light of the New Testament. The promise links up with the history of Abraham and his descendants (Acts 7:17; Rom. 4:13), rests on grace (Rom. 4:15), has a perspective on new heavens and a new earth (II Peter 3:13), and on eternal life (I John 2:25). All the promises of God, not only the Messianic prophecies or predictions, find their Yes in Christ (II Cor. 1:20). (Payne, 1970, p. 291)

The covenants are one of the contexts in which "the promise" and other special promises were given. A brief look at each major covenant will have to suffice for this paper.

In the Abrahamic covenant God concluded, "and in thee shall the families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:30). Here at the first major covenant the end is in view. All the people of the earth will find blessing in what God does through Abraham.

This is the meaning and the soul of the Old Testament. Therefore it is from end

to end full of promises of salvation for the whole human race, especially throughout Isaiah. Of all books of the pre-Christian times the Old Testament is the most universal, embracing all peoples more than any other literature of that earlier world. It is the only writing of the ancient Orient which has the idea of the unity of the human race and the hope of a united movement of mankind to a common goal. (Sauer, 1952, p. 75)

That common goal is faith in God the Savior. The Abrahamic covenant is the foundation for all the other covenants in the Old Testament. This covenant includes the related elements of salvation by grace, personal and national election, and the goal of the complete transformation of life. "In the next period, the Abrahamic testament stressed imputed, not earned, salvation (Gen. 15:6). Its monergism is indicated, first of all, by the oath form in which the divine promise was stated (Gen. 22:17; cf. Heb.5:17), by which God made it clear that he would perform what He had promised." (Payne, 1970, p. 233) Vos adds,

... not all who are descended from Abraham are children of God and of the promise (Rom. 9:6ff). The elective principle, abolished as to nationality, continues in force as to individuals. ... He begins with giving them promises. The keynote is not what Abraham has to do for God, but what God will do for Abraham. Then, in response to this, the subjective frame of mind that changes the inner and outer life is cultivated. (1968, p. 93)

The goal of the Abrahamic covenant is salvation for all the peoples. God here narrows down to one nation--Israel, through whom He will work to provide blessing for all. The Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 19:4-5) and many other passages in the Law (the Pentateuch) speak of the promise.

Law and promise--there are the two chief pillars of Old revelation. The one is the royal, the other the prophetic. The connecting link between the two is the temple.

The priestly service is at once law and promise. (Sauer, 1952, 141)

This emphasis on the temple is essential. The temple stood as the place where man (male or female, prophet, priest or king) could come to be reconciled to God and find forgiveness of sins. The: temple is the place where God dwelt among humanity and from which He offered them fellowship.

The Law is clear in its ultimate sense: the Savior establishes a new relationship on the basis of grace. It concerns a way in which the new man, and the new nation, relate to the Savior. In essence the Mosaic covenant begins where the promise concludes. Yet the law is itself a further explication of how the salvation given by God is going to be lived out by His people.

The Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7) narrows the person of the savior down to the house of David. One day a descendent of David (called "my lord" by David) will rule over the nation of Israel and over the nations of the world.

The prophets develop further the concepts of promise and application of the promise. Oehler has given a complete summary.

The theology of Mosaism is further developed by prophecy, especially in the following respects:

1. With regard to the doctrine of God and of his relation to the world, the idea of Jehovah develops into the Divine name of THE LORD OF HOSTS (Jehovah Sabaoth), with which is connected a further expansion of angelology.
2. In its conflict both with the legal externalism and the apostasy of the people, the intrinsically moral nature of the Law is further developed by Prophecy, and

greater depth thus given to that view of man's religious and moral development which Mosaism involves; in other words, the doctrine of sin and of righteousness is further unfolded.

3. The communion of man with God culminates in Prophecy. The nature of prophetic revelation and of prophecy will be here represented as the continuation of what Mosaism teaches concerning the forms of Divine revelation.

4. The progress of the kingdom of God forms the essential matter of prophecy.

(p. 437)

God, says the prophet, has kept his promise. He will raise up a Son, a descendent of Abraham and of David. Through this one He will bless all the peoples. This is the conclusion God sets forth to the matter of sin. He will be the victor! He will win because He will come to do battle Himself. It is now up to Him to provide what He has promised. Nothing can overcome God. Therefore He, and we as the recipients of the promise, will be the victors.

3. Messiah. The person through whom God declares He will bring victory is termed the Messiah--the anointed one. Some writers who identify the Messiah as the fulfillment of the promise do not feel free to say that the Old Testament peoples themselves recognized this truth.(Vos, 1968, p. 55; Keil, 1875, p. 67-68)

But many writers agree that the Old Testament persons knew the identity of the Messiah--God Himself. Oehler says, "The Messianic hope had already struck root in a series of passages in the Pentateuch; hence our representation of the Messianic idea must start from these." (p. 522) Payne draws this point out in depth.

A. KINGLY WORK, Christ's executing of the testament. Along with the primeval declaration of the person of the Messiah (Gen.3:15) came the first

description of His work: He would shuf, "trample upon, crush" the serpent's head. This same verb reappears in the next clause, 'And you (serpent, Satan) will shuf his heel.' The meaning, "trample," is here, however, clearly inappropriate; the repetition of the verb seems rather to be for the sake of poetic balance and effect. The latter clause may thus more legitimately be rendered, "The serpent will bruise, or injure, His heel." The point then is this: Christ's redemptive work would require genuine labor, sacrifice, and grief on his part, but not permanently so. His sovereign overthrow of Satan, on the other hand, and his re-establishment of mankind with God, would be complete and would be eternal.

Jacob, in the patriarchal period, and Balaam, in the Mosaic, both spoke of the Messiah as wielding the sceptre--breaking down human opposition (Num. 24:17) and gaining the obedience of peoples (Gen. 49:10). The concluding verse in Hannah's consolidation period song of thanksgiving (I Sam. 2:10) then becomes the first passage in Scripture in which the coming Deliverer is specifically designated Messiah, "the anointed One"; and it becomes also the first in which He is explicitly called melek, "king": God will "give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed." The Person to whom I Samuel 2:10 refers cannot be King Saul (who was not yet born), for the reign of the king to whom the reference is made takes place in that yet future age when Yahweh shall judge the ends of the earth. The subject of Messiah must indeed be the Christ.

David likewise refers to the anointed eschatological king as Messiah (Ps. 2:2). He predicted the Messiah's ascension to heaven (68:18) and His session upon the right hand of Yahweh (110:9). David anticipated also the time when he should

return to the earth to assume its total rule (v. 2) (1962, 275)

This understanding of the person and work of the Messiah as the fulfillment of the promise is developed further in the prophets.

Vos comments,

The conception of a personal Messiah appears in Isa. 9:1-7, possibly also in chaps. 32,33. It occurs in Mic. 5, and according to one interpretation in Hos. 3:5, where David might be a personal name of the Messiah. It is not found with Amos. The name "Immanuel" strikingly expresses this fundamental concept. Afterwards, in Isa. 53, under the name "Servant of Jehovah" he becomes the sacrificial expiator of the sin of Israel on the principle of vicarious sin-bearing. (1968, p. 317)

Payne agrees in this matter and extends the identification of the Messiah showing the link with the New Testament.

Isaiah even says, in so many words, that the Servant is "anointed" (61:1), He and the Messiah can only be one and the same. Zechariah, in post-exilic days, therefore associates the Messianic Branch with the priestly function of removing men's iniquity (Zech. 3:8,9); and he specifically equates the two offices in his phrase, "My servant the Branch" (v. 8). He further identifies the deity who is pierced (12:10) with the deity who will yet descend upon the Mount of Olives to reign (14:4).(1962, p. 280)

This pre-incarnate identification of the Messiah is affirmed by Jesus Himself in the New Testament.

The New Testament (John 12:38,41; Acts 8:32-35) settles the identity of the Servant as

being Messianic; and Christ Himself, before His death said of Isa. 53:12, "This which is written must be fulfilled in me" (Luke 22:37; cf. Isa. 61:1, 2; Luke 4:21).

Daniel also identifies the Messiah for us. In 9:24-27 Daniel says the Messiah will be killed, but by that act will make reconciliation for iniquity (24) and will confirm the covenant (Abrahamic?) with the many (27).

This is also a theme in Zechariah.

Finally, Zechariah (post-exilic period) revealed how the good shepherd, God's associate, would be smitten, prior to the extending of God's hand on behalf of His little flock (13:7). Zechariah further described how Israel would look upon God in His glorious Second Advent, but would see in him the One whom they had previously pierced (12:10) and valued at thirty pieces of silver (11:12). Thus, though the revelations were scattered, the Old Testament consistently maintained the necessity of the death of the Son of God for the effectuation of the testament. (Payne, 1962, 256-67)

Only the Son of God who is God Himself could be such a sacrifice and could guarantee the outcome. No wonder the concept of the Messiah as the fulfillment of the promise is a central theme of both testaments. Jesus is the Messiah; He is the Savior; He is God on earth; He is the fulfillment of the promise; the hope of nations; the new Israel. He is the guarantee that God controls history in spite of sin. He is the redeemer of the world.

4. Redemption, Let us look now at redemption, how the work of salvation was to be accomplished by the Savior. Sin had disturbed the original innocence and fellowship man enjoyed with God. Old and New testaments alike bear witness to the fact that God's person and power are revealed by nature. Genesis 2-3 are clear that man had good fellowship with God.

But these were disrupted by sin.

In regard to material revelation Vos comments, Nature from within no longer functions normally in sinful man. Both his religious and his moral sense of God may have become blunted and blinded. And the finding of God in nature without has also been made subject to error and distortion. The innate sense of God as lying closer to the inner being of man is more seriously affected by this than his outward observation of the working of God in nature. Hence the exhortation addressed in Scripture to the heathen, that they shall correct their foolish pre-conceptions of the nature of God through attention to the works of creation) e.g., Isa. 40:25, 26; Ps. 94:5-11. The main correction, however, of the natural knowledge of God cannot come from within nature itself, it must be supplied by the supernaturalism of redemption. Redemption in a supernatural way restores to fallen man also the normalcy and efficiency of his cognition of God in the sphere of nature. (1968, p. 69)

Redemption includes the fact of a restored view of God. Our world may be under a curse, but we see the power and person of God behind it. The ontological, teleological and cosmological arguments make perfect sense to the renewed man.

The Old Testament includes even more testimony to the renewal of the personal relationship with God.

But God is concerned about mankind's desperate plight. He is eager to come to man's rescue: "How shall I give thee up!" (Hos. 11:8). His purpose in history is to bring men back to Himself through Jesus Christ (II Cor. 5:19); and, historically, God's revelation has appeared only in conjunction with God's redemption. Since

redemption at all times has been in Christ (John 14:6), Scripture presents but one plan of salvation. This is the most important single feature of the general unity of Biblical theology. (Payne, 1962, p. 18)

This one plan of salvation redeems us from eternal loss of our knowledge of God and our relationship with Him.

This redemption from the penalty of sin is the work of God. "The Old Testament idea of redemption, then, lays emphasis on the divine initiative, comprehends within itself the deliverance from material as well as from spiritual perils and constraints" (Vriezen, 1954, p. 272) The whole of redemption concerns recovering a relationship which was lost to us. God is paying the necessary price for this restoration. ". . . only God Himself was capable of making the sufficient, atoning redemption (cf. Ps. 65:3; for when men are said to 'make atonement,' Ex. 29:36; 30:10, it is only as God's representatives or mediators)." (Payne, 1962, p. 248)

We shall look briefly at how this principle of redemption from sin was revealed in different periods. In the Mosaic period the outstanding example of redemption was the Exodus. "The exodus from Egypt is the Old Testament redemption. This is not an anachronistic, allegorizing manner of speaking. It is based on the inner coherence of O.T. and N.T. religion itself. These two, however different their forms of expression, are yet one in principle. The same purpose and method of God run through both." (Vos, 1968, 124) This revelation of redemption included specific ideas as to the nature of sin and redemption. First of all, redemption is here portrayed as a deliverance from an objective realm of sin and evil. A second principle relates to the one who redeems. In the Exodus context the redeemer is God, through Moses (Nun 12:7). Moses pointed to this similarity in Deuteronomy 13 when he said, "a prophet like me shall come to you." Thus, in the Old Testament, the idea of a redeemer had personal

application. The average person in Israel may have looked for a personal savior to come from God, much as he had seen Moses come from God.

A similar understanding of grace is present in Job. "Elihu spoke by inspiration of the ransom (kofer) that God would provide as a redemptive substitute for Job, who must otherwise go down lost into the grave." (Payne, 1972, p. 254) In the context, the Angel of the Lord is described as the ransom price based on his own righteousness (v. 23, v. 26). The assurance of a personal redeemer led Job to proclaim, "I know that my redeemer lives and that at the last he will stand upon the earth. And though worms destroy my body, yet in my flesh I shall see God." (19:25-26) Job was assured of the person of the redeemer, his gracious work, and the eternal, personal result of redemption.

The prophets also pointed to the redeemer. Isaiah is the great prophet of redemption. The clearest point of revelation of salvation is in chapters 40-55. God is "repeatedly called His people's goal, their kinsman-redeemer; He brings near His righteousness which is at once His own victorious vindication and the deliverance of His people. He alone is Yahweh, and beside me, He says, there is no savior." (Bruce, 1963, p. 48)

This savior/redeemer is also described in Isaiah 53. "In this chapter Israel's hope concerning God's redeeming activity and the atonement which He brings about flow together." (Vriezen, 1954, p. 273.) There is no other single chapter in Scripture which so perfectly pictures the person of the redeemer (vs. 1-3); those in need of redeeming (vs. 4-6); the work of redemption (vs. 7-9); and the satisfaction of God at what is accomplished (vs. 10-12).

Payne relates this passage in Isaiah to his great contemporary Hosea. The Servant makes intercession for the transgressors and thus by His justifying work comes to see a numerous seed who gain an inheritance under the testament (Isa. 53:10). So too Hosea

prophesied that the very God who had smitten Israel in His justice would subsequently bind them up in His gracious redemption (Hos. 6:1). Hosea then went on to describe the divine priestly means by which Israel's salvation would be effected, "After two days will He revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live before Him." (1962, 276).

Redemption is the great work of God. Other passages include the great section in Jeremiah 30-32 about the new covenant, Zechariah's bold declaration of the Messiah as the one who has been pierced (12:10).

Conclusion

The promise of God is that He is in control of the world. He will handle the problems of sin and its consequences, and He desires to do so because of His love for humanity, created in the image of His son and to be His brothers. The means to overcoming sin and finding victory is in the human-divine person who will die as a substitute for sinners, redeeming them, and making life available to those who deserve death. God conveyed these great promises (1 Peter 1:4) to men by means of preaching and prophets. He gave the new believers rules to live by as His people (covenants). Lest men forget God and his covenants, God instituted the religious practices as visible signs of His faithfulness to love and forgive and of our need to come to Him.'

Chapter 3

SALVATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A. The Biblical Theology of the Book

1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to show the relationship between the testaments concerning salvation and to develop the New Testament teaching. Chapters two and three will form an important part in preparation for a discussion in the following chapters of the theological tension points between the Calvinist and Anminian points of view on salvation.

Beginning with man's estrangement from God in Cenesis 3 and God's promise of salvation in that chapter, the theme of salvation is developed throughout the Bible to the book of Revelation where in chapters 21-22 we see salvation completed. Thus the themes of the savior and salvation run through both testaments. However, there is much discussion as to how the two testaments are to be related.

An obvious distinction has to do with the fulfillment of predictions and types. James Packer says,

When one comes to the New Testament one finds a tremendous development of the salvation pattern as all the typical elements of the old dispensation give way to their corresponding antitypes under the new. God rescues now from spiritual bondage, bondage to sin and Satan, and he rescues for a heavenly life, the life of a new world and new order. He rescues through Christ his appointed Savior through whom He saves and He does so in two stages.¹

A further connection in this vein is given by F. F. Bruce.

That word "redemption" itself is drawn from the language of the Exodus and the

return from exile: as the people of God were redeemed from slavery in Egypt and later from captivity in Babylon so in the fulness of time they were redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ from spiritual bondage under "the elemental spirits of the universe." In some degree the New Testament sees certain phases of the Exodus pattern recapitulated in the personal experiences of Christ.²

Thus the fulfillment of the Old Testament is indicated as a point of continuity, not of discontinuity. A related fact is that the New Testament uses linguistic terms to describe salvation which were developed in the Old Testament.

The New Testament, while it abstains from interpreting Christ's death by any special prescriptions of the Levitical law, constantly uses sacrificial language to describe that death, and in doing so unequivocally recognized in it a propitiatory character in other words, a reference to sin and its forgiveness.³

This means that the foundation for the New Testament discussion of salvation is the Old Testament, not Greek or Roman philosophy.

The two testaments present a common theme - salvation. And in both testaments there are two major aspects.

First, God is always the rescuer. In both Testaments He is hailed as Savior. . . .

The second constant is the people who are rescued. They are men, sinful men, a particular class of sinful men, the seed of Abraham, the company proclaimed and then narrowed down in the New Testament so that they become a mere faithful remnant, for the company then in and through Christ broadens out in the New Testament to become an international company of Christians.⁴

It is clear that there is a continuity and development of this theme in both testaments. But a

question has been raised concerning the precise nature of this continuity.

The question has often been dealt with in the theological distinction between covenantal and dispensational understanding of the link between the two testaments. J. Barton Payne, a covenantal theologian, has said, "There is but one, unified testament, God's sole plan of salvation, through which Christ offers a redemption that is equally effective for the saints of both dispensations."⁵ In this plan Payne indicates that one message is offered which leads to salvation.

In facing this same problem of the continuity of salvation Charles Ryrie, a dispensationalist, says:

The dispensationalists' answer to the problem is this: The basis of salvation in every age is the death of Christ; the requirement for salvation in every age is faith; the object of faith in every age is God; the content of faith changes in the various dispensations.⁶

If by two "ways" of salvation is meant different content of faith, then dispensationalism does teach two ways because the Scriptures teach thus. But if by "ways" is meant two bases or means, then dispensationalism most emphatically does not teach two ways.⁷

Therefore, the heart of this question concerns the exact content of faith. 1 Peter 1:10-12 provides a clear answer to this problem.

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to

you through those who preached the gospel to you by the holy Spirit sent from heaven - things into which angels long to look.

In this passage Peter says that the prophets of the Old Testament understood five things:

1. the message of salvation centers in the Christ,
2. the savior would suffer,
3. the savior would have glory,
4. the order is first suffering, then glory
5. they were writing to communicate the gospel to future generations.

There are two things Peter says were not known in the Old Testament:

1. the exact person,
2. the exact timing of the two comings.

They did understand the message of a messiah who would be God Himself come to save His people. But they did not know that this would be Jesus of Nazareth. It is also clear that the Jew of the Old Testament era understood far more of the theology of salvation than is generally supposed today. There is often a tendency to think that the theological level of the Pharisees represents the highest level achieved by the Jews prior to the coming of Christ. Much rather, we should see it as a point of degeneration and failure. The Jew understood the things of the Messiah, he simply did not know who the individual was to be.

It has been shown that there are elements of both continuity and discontinuity between the testaments. The concern of both is to spread the message of salvation through the work of a savior to all the earth.

The proclamation of the finished work of Christ is not good advice; it is good news, good news that means immeasurable joy for those who welcome it,

irreparable loss for those who reject it and infinite and urgent responsibility for all. The man who has this to preach has a gospel about which he ought to be in dead earnest.⁸

Denny is correct in placing the emphasis on the joyous news of the gospel.

2. The Gospels and Acts

The four Gospels and the book of Acts contain the clearest presentation of the person and work of the Savior. This is true because, "The Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles stand first, although from a literary point of view this is not the chronological sequence. Theirs is the first place, because there is embodied in them the great actuality of N.T. Redemption."⁹ This redemption is developed in the epistles. But nowhere in the epistles is an attempt made to present the savior in all his fullness. That presentation is the heart of the four gospels and the sermons of the book of Acts.

The first presentation of the Savior is given at His birth.

Thus when Simeon saw the young child Jesus in the temple, he was able to say to God, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation; (Lk. 2:30). As the angel indicated to Joseph, the child's name was to be 'Jesus' (a common enough Jewish name, equivalent to the Old Testament form 'Joshua'), which means 'Saviour' because this indicated the work that lie was to do (Mt. 1:21).¹⁰

In this way the gospel writers present the Savior as Jesus. The time and the person for whom all the people of God have been waiting has now been brought forth. Jesus is the Savior God has promised. He is now restoring the relationships destroyed in the fall.

John's presentation of Jesus does not center on his birth. Rather, John wants to give to the world the person of Jesus in continuity with the saving God of the Old Testament. John makes

this point clear by beginning the discussion with the “Logos” in 1:1-9. He further develops and centralizes the importance of the message in his statement of salvation in 1:12.

The very first statement in the Gospels concerning the new birth makes it dependent upon faith (John 1:12). The verse also mentions the object of faith, Christ. Thus it is throughout the Gospel - the Son as the bearer of salvation must be the object of faith Faith involves the most thorough kind of appropriation of the person and work of Christ as the basis for the believer's confident persuasion for salvation.¹¹

John centers our thoughts on the person of Jesus Christ as the “Logos” and as the person to whom the Old Testament looked. He then immediately calls for faith, for receiving Christ, as the desired response to the coming of the Savior. This centers the theme of the Gospel in the message of salvation.

John also tells us that God is at work to draw people to Jesus by faith (1:9, 29,41; 6:37, 44). "But for John too, the present is the time of salvation only because in the past God sent the man Jesus as 'savior of the world' and because through the Spirit the exalted Christ causes those who are his to participate in this salvation."¹² In John's gospel Jesus is present as the savior of all men who will come to Him by faith, being enlightened and drawn by the Spirit of God. Jesus also spoke many times about the methods and means of salvation "God is for Jesus the Father who will receive his children into his coming kingdom and will forgive them if they heed the call to conversion."¹³ In this way Jesus ties the Old Testament themes concerning the Father and the kingdom to His own presence as the Savior. However, Jesus developed the message even further.

Association with Jesus allows man to participate in the final salvation that has

begun with Jesus, the consumation of which Jesus promises for the immediate future. Thus it is a quite definitive divine eschatological history which Jesus sets before his hearers, and he challenges them to participate in it.¹⁴

In thus challenging those who heard Him to express faith, Jesus was reintroducing the Mosaic commission to be a nation of priests to win the whole world (Genesis 12:1; Exodus 19:5-6).

It is only when a person thus experiences faith and is transformed that entry into the kingdom becomes possible (Matthew 18:3; Mark 10:15; John 3:3-5). How this takes place is not explained in the Gospels. Jesus said the manner of conversion was as mysterious as the wind (John 3:8). All that is clear is that it is possible with God. "From the human point of view, the Gospels simply show us that when men and women received the message of Jesus and became His disciples, the miracle was wrought in their hearts."¹⁵

Another tie to this theme of kingdom and Savior is seen in the triumphal entry. "Jesus' entry into Jerusalem in fulfilment of Zech. 9:9 presents him as the king who comes in the name of the Lord to accomplish His victory for the deliverance of His people."¹⁶ This situation led the apostles to ask Jesus repeatedly, "Is it now you are going to restore the kingdom?" The expectation of contemporary Judaism and Jesus' use of kingdom terminology provided a base for the apostles misunderstanding. But Jesus patiently kept on explaining the true spiritual nature of His present kingdom - Matthew 4:17; 6:33; 9:35; 24:14; Mark 9:1,47; 12:34; Luke 9:27; 10:9, 11; 21:13. Even so, until the resurrection, the apostles had great difficulty understanding that salvation is tied to the kingdom of God.

The Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 linked the new resurrection life of power with the kingdom theme in two ways. Jesus began the commission by saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." This identified Jesus as the king possessing a

kingdom. The final phrase of the commission, "and I will be with you always," is a summary statement of the great promise formula of the Old Testament, "You shall be my people and I will be your God and I will dwell in your midst." (Leviticus 26:12; Deuteronomy 7:6).

Jesus also linked salvation to His death and resurrection.

All the synoptic Gospels introduce it (the death of Christ) in this sense, at the same point (Mk. viii. 31; Mt. xvi. 21; Lk. ix. 22). A comparison of the evangelists justifies us in saying broadly that a new epoch in our Lord's ministry has now begun. His audience is not so much the multitudes as the twelve; His method is not so much preaching as teaching; His subject is not so much the kingdom as Himself, and in particular His death.¹⁷

The apostles did not know how to respond to this teaching. Even when Jesus described it in terms of eating His body and drinking his blood (a description which turned away many of his followers) the apostles' reply expressed only faith, not understanding. "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:68).

The theological implications of Jesus' death were also present in his teaching. "Jesus saw his death as something far more than an act of courageous and final witness to the truth of His message. He regarded it as an act of service for mankind, the offering of a sacrifice and the payment of a ransom through which they might be delivered from sin and death."¹⁸ There are many important factors in this teaching.

First, the death of Christ is presented as a divine necessity. It took place according to the will of God. Jesus' prayer in the garden (John 18) was that the Father's will would be accomplished. Second, Jesus' death was so that all who came to Him might live (Mark 10:45).

The book of Acts continues this central teaching on salvation in the person of Jesus. And

in these early days of Christianity the focus was still on the reality and presence of salvation.

Denny comments on Peter's sermon in Acts 2.

Here we have to consider such points as these. First, the death of Christ is repeatedly presented, as in our Lord's own teaching in the light of a divine necessity. It took place "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (2:23). In the second place we notice the frequent identification, in these early discourses, of the suffering Messiah with the Servant of the Lord in the Book of Isaiah. Thirdly, this connection of ideas in the primitive Church is made clearer still when we notice that the great blessing of the gospel, offered in the name of Jesus, is the forgiveness of sins. this is the refrain of every apostolic sermon.¹⁹

In this way the theme is still on the person of Jesus, His death, and the call to faith.

Marshall describes the theological intention of the preachers in Acts.

The latter New Testament writers believed that Jesus was 'made to be sin' and that He was under the curse of God as hung on the cross (2 Cor. 5:19; Gal. 3:13).

Their teaching provides the explanation of the cry; on the cross Jesus was dying as for sinners and there endured that exclusion from God which consequence of sin.²⁰

James Packer's discussion of the jailer's question in Acts 16 is a good summary of this point.

Now it is not too much to say that the whole New Testament is an answer to the jailer's question. I owe to Gustaf Wingren, the Lutheran, the remark that whereas Barth's theology is concerned with the being of God and man's knowledge of God and God's revelation, the New Testament centers rather on the works of God and the sins of man and God's justification. That I think is true.²¹

3. The Epistles

In the epistles a deeper theological development is given of this salvation found in Christ.

John Stott says concerning Romans 5,

First of all, we are depicted as 'helpless' (verse 6), unable to save ourselves; secondly, we are called 'ungodly' (verse 6) because of our revolt against the authority of God; thirdly, we are called 'sinners' (verse 8), because we have missed the mark of righteousness, however carefully we may have aimed at it; and fourthly (verse 10), we are called 'enemies', because of the hostility between us and God. What a fearful, devastating description of man in sin. We are failures, we are rebels, we are enemies, and we are helpless to save ourselves.²²

It is in light of this understanding of the helplessness of man that the teaching of salvation becomes not only true but also persuasive. Jesus had included this element in his preaching, even though it is often ignored.

Despite much that is popularly believed about Jesus' conviction of the essential goodness of men, the inescapable fact is that He taught as stern a doctrine of sin as is to be found anywhere in the Bible. They were rebels against God, captives under the sway of evil. Nothing that they could do was able to set them free.²³

In many ways, the most complete development of this doctrine of salvation is found in Paul's writing. Romans 1-8 is the most expository teaching section on salvation,

We are to accept by an act of trust that righteousness which is already finished and completed by the death of our blessed Lord upon the cross. This also is a necessary part of the doctrine: that whosoever believeth in Him (trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ) is in that moment forgiven, justified, and accepted in the Beloved.²⁴

These themes of the blood of Jesus, atonement, justification by faith, and forgiveness are found in all of Paul's letters.

If the question is raised as to how our salvation in Christ is worked out in our lives, Paul has an answer:

How does God save? First, by the event of the cross completed in the resurrection, second, by the continuing heavenly ministry of Christ, and third, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit whom the saved receive as God's seal set upon them to make them as His and as the earnest and first installment of the salvation which is finally to be theirs with Christ in glory.²⁵

This reflects salvation from God's point of view.

Ryrie adds the view from the human side.

Paul conceived of redemption in its broadest terms. It was a purchase (I Cor. 6:20; 7:23). It included an irrevocable deliverance (Gal. 3:13; 4:4~5), and it guaranteed release on payment of ransom (Titus 2:14; Rom. 3:24; 8:23; I Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:7, 14; 4:30; Col. 1:14). The idea of ransom does not make the concept of redemption entirely a commercial one, for redemption is also vicarious. Substitution is seen in Romans 3:24, and Paul's use of *hoper*, in place of, also requires the vicarious idea (II Cor.5:21; Gal. 3:13; cf. Philem. 13).²⁶

Thus Christ is preached as the one who brings about salvation and as relating to every believer on a personal basis as substitute.

This teaching on salvation centers on the idea of justification in Paul's letters. The law is fulfilled, for Christ is the completion of the law for righteousness (Romans 10:4). We are complete in Christ by means of justification, sanctification, and glorification (Romans 8:29-30).

The conclusion to this in Paul has been beautifully stated by Charles Spurgeon in commenting on 1 Corinthians 6:20.

I push you to this; you either were or were not so bought; if you were, it is the grand fact of your life; if you were, it is the greatest fact that ever will occur to you: let it operate upon you, let it dominate your entire nature, let it govern your body, your soul, your spirit, and from this day let it be said of you not only that you are a man, a man of good morals and respectable conduct, but this, above all things, that you are a man filled with love to Him who bought you, a man who lives for Christ, and knows no other passion. Would God that redemption would become the paramount influence, the lord of our soul, and dictator of our being; then were we indeed true to our obligations; short of this we are not what love and justice both demand.²⁷

This is the form our preaching of salvation should take. These great theological issues should result in a challenge which moves men to come to the Savior.

The heart of Paul's teaching on salvation is given in Romans 3:21-4:25. In 3:22 Paul introduces the concept of faith in Christ by saying that righteousness has been revealed, "even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe." In this short verse the concept of faith in Christ as an active principle of life in leading to salvation is summarized. In the next few verses justification, redemption, and propitiation are introduced. But Paul's point here is not to explain these terms in detail. His point is to introduce justification and he returns to this in verses 24, 26, 28 and 30. To allow greater understanding Paul uses an illustration. This is given to us in chapter 4. Abraham is the great illustration of salvation by faith. The point of the illustration is made in verses 22-25.

Therefore also it was reckoned to him as righteous. Now not for his sake only was it written, that 'it was reckoned to him,' but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

The principle of substitution is taught here under the word 'reckoning'. The element of an individual's acceptance of the substitution of Christ is added to make reckoning an active principle. If we believe in God through Jesus we will be reckoned as justified.

In these few verses in chapter 4 and 5 we have Paul's theology of salvation.

1. Salvation originates with God
2. Jesus' death is the basis for our salvation
3. The central idea of salvation is justification
4. The means of salvation is God reckoning us as righteous when we have faith in him through Jesus Christ.

The other major writing than Paul's which discusses salvation is the book of Hebrews. In the introduction to Hebrews (1:3) the author describes Jesus with the terms "when He had made purification for sins." Purification (*katharismos*) occurs only in verse 3 in the book. It means to cleanse. Here it is limited with *poiesamenos* (having made, a middle perfect participle). This is in direct contrast to the Levitical system. It is Jesus, not the priests, who cleanses from sin. It is He Himself who cleanses, not merely conveys the word of cleansing. He accomplished it once for all. Thus at the very beginning of the book Jesus is pictured as the Savior, in distinction from a Levitical priest, indeed in contrast to the entire Levitical system. The whole matter of sin is settled by Jesus Christ once for all. Then, says Hebrews 1:3, He sat down, He was finished.

In Hebrews 2:9 two thoughts are added. Christ "came for the suffering of death", According to Robertson this is a causal use of the preposition. Jesus became a man so that He could suffer death. It is also added, "that He might taste death for all men." This is the first phrase in the book which guides our discussion beyond the general Christian doctrine and points to a specific theological framework. "*Huper*" means "in behalf of" or "instead of" and is linked with "*pantos*" which means "every man." There is something in the substitutionary death of Christ which is for every man or for all men. Either distributively or inclusively the group is delineated; it includes everyone.

Further, that universal element is specified, namely "He tasted death." This phrase occurs in Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27; and John 8:52. It refers in each case in the gospels to people not tasting death, i.e, not dying. If Christ tasted death for us, He died for us. Therefore this text leads us to an unlimited atonement. I do not feel free, with the strict Calvinist, to reinterpret the word *pantos* here to mean "all Christians".

How it is that Christ's death becomes effective for men is not expressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews as clearly as it is in the Pauline Epistles. The author was not an evangelist so much as a pastor, and it is not the initiation of Christianity but its conservation with which he deals throughout. But in substance it may be said, Christ's work must be appropriated by men identifying themselves with Him²⁸

Hebrews 2:14 adds the phrase "in order that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death." The one who has the power of death is identified previously as Satan by the commentators. Jesus "worked against" this one. He effectually countered the activation of death. In Christ we are free from death. Does this mean free from spiritual death? Yes. Does it also mean free from physical death? Yes, for those who are in the generation which will be

raptured. Does it mean free from the presence of death in us in this life? Yes. He shall give life "to our mortal bodies" (Romans 8:11; taking this with numerous commentators not to refer to giving us a resurrected bodies, but to refer to giving life to the bodies we have now), Jesus, by his death, worked effectually against death, Note that the group who is to benefit by this work is unspecified. But they are to receive benefit in this life from what Jesus did for us on the cross.

Hebrews 2:17 parallels 1:3 but takes it further, He died "to make propitiation for the sins of the people." The present middle of the infinitive of this verb occurs only here in the New Testament. Propitiation is a Godward rendering of satisfaction. It is specified that this is done by the action of Christ (present), by Him alone, and in relation to the sins of the people. The Old Testament sacrifices were appointed by God and accepted as the means of atonement, but full propitiation of the righteous requirement of God was only accomplished by the work of Christ. Who the people are is not specified. But the benefit to them is specified - satisfaction before God. Whoever these people are, God's wrath has been removed and His justice satisfied. "Thus he understands the death of Jesus as a vicarious act in which He tasted death for every one (Heb. 2:9). His meaning is plainly that Jesus died so that we need not taste the bitterness of death."²⁹

If we assume the removal of wrath is actual for a believer in Christ's death and occurs at the time of His death, we will come down on the limited atonement side. If we believe the removal is now available for all in Christ's death, though effectively applied to none yet, we are in the unlimited atonement category. This text does not point to either conclusion exclusively.

Throughout the New Testament the resurrected Christ is seen as the antitype and we are promised a similar life, a similar body. In Hebrews 5:9 it describes Jesus having been "made perfect". The basic idea, according to Kittel, is full completion.³⁰ James Barr adds that this word implies something properly done or done at just the right time.³¹ Christ, then, has been

made complete. He paid for sin exactly as was needed and is now the God-Man in perfect relation to the Father. There is nothing more for Him to do in order to secure salvation for men. This verse is indicating the uniqueness and finality of the source of our salvation.

Hebrews 7:22 says "Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant." The covenant, established at Sinai, regulated the life of the believer in the Mosaic economy. For the Christian, says Hebrews, there is a better covenant. The Mosaic covenant regulated the religious, social and civil life of the Israelite. In similar fashion the New Testament gives us regulations concerning each aspect of our lives. Thus the new relationship the Christian has with God does not include only the spiritual. God desires to affect every area of life.

Jesus has been established, as a priest by oath of God, to stand before us in heaven as a guarantee, a visible sign of the new relationship we have as we are united with Christ by the Father.

The scope of our salvation is mentioned in Hebrews 7:25. "He is able to save entirely the ones coming to God by him." "Save" is the usual word "*sozo*". The word "entirely" (*pantelas*) is not common. The emphasis is upon the completeness of salvation from any judgement which could ever come upon us. Jesus has set us free.

In chapter nine there are five verses referring to the death of Christ. In 9:12 Christ is said to have entered the holy place - the presence of God - through his own blood. The means of access here is His blood. The shedding of the blood of the sacrifices in the Old Testament and of Christ in the New Testament, emphasizes the necessity of death in payment for sin.

L. S. Chafer says that death in payment is not the thought involved.³² He sees the emphasis as the offering of life as a substitute. In this vein, the death of Christ and the shedding of His blood are separate, though related, issues.

The second reference pertaining to atonement in Hebrews 9 is verse 14: "who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God." When Christ laid aside His prerogatives as deity (Philippians 2) He was from that point led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit's power Christ offered himself to God as an unblemished sacrifice. Christ pointed out the practical value of this doctrine when He said, "greater works than these shall you do because I go to the Father," and "if I go then I will send the Holy Spirit to you." We are encouraged to be filled with the Spirit, to grow in the fruit of the Spirit, and to bear much evangelistic fruit. The Spirit is at work in us to pray, empower, lead, etc., as He did in Christ. When we are called upon to present ourselves as living sacrifices, it is in imitation of Jesus by the same Spirit.

Beyond the work of the Spirit in the atonement, we also see Christ freely offering Himself. Here is a basis for describing the worth of man, the significance of life - Jesus counts us so important He was willing to die for us.

In Hebrews 9:15 the New Testament is related to the Old Testament by the death of Christ. "And for this cause He is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

The old covenant demanded righteousness, showed the result of sin and pointed out the means of salvation, But the actualization of salvation occurred in the new covenant, Thus the new covenant moves beyond the old, while at the same time fulfilling it; the promise which has long been anticipated is realized in the death of Christ. Not only are sins paid for, but the positive side, the new life in Christ, is brought in. In this one act of the death of God's Son, redemption from the penalty of transgressions and the inheritance of the promise are dealt with and completed.

The death of Christ is therefore seen as corresponding to the inaugural sacrifice of the old covenant. With the sacrificial blood Moses had sprinkled the people and the various utensils of their worship in order that they might be purified and acceptable to God. In the same way, believers are sprinkled with the blood of Christ in order that their consciences and hearts may be cleansed and they may be acceptable to God (Heb. 9:14; 10:22,29; 12:24; 13:20).³³

Notice that this affects both those under the Old Testament and those under the New Testament. There are differences between the two economies, but there are strong points of continuity.

Hebrews 9:26 says Christ has appeared to put away (*athetasin*) sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Christ in the one sacrifice of Himself put away sins from all men. The word here for “put away” means annul or cancel. The word “sins” is plural in Greek. The effect of sin is physical decay and death, and spiritual inability and separation from God.

It should perhaps be noted that a real sacrifice is meant; on the basis of Heb, 10:5 it has sometimes been thought that the obedience of Christ is contrasted with 'sacrifices and offerings', but the Epistle as a whole leaves no doubt that it was His actual death, obediently undergone, which constituted His saving act. This is confirmed by the way in which the writer, like Paul and Peter, lays stress on the shedding of Christ's blood (Heb. 9:14).³³

Christ annulled, or cancelled the effects of sin by his death. Here we have to see Christ's death as having both actual effect (for those who had already died), and potential effect (for those who were yet to sin).

The final verse of Hebrews 9 (verse 28) speaks to the extent of the atonement. "Christ was offered to bear the sins of many (*to pollon*)." "The many" does not say "all" but it must

imply more than a few. If Christ died for the sins of the many, then we must believe that many will be saved. How often we believe that none, or only a few will respond to the gospel. Yet the Bible says Christ died for the sins of many. God's intention in the atonement, Christ's intention in dying, was for the many.

There remain two verses for us to consider concerning the atonement. Hebrews 10:14 says, "by one offering He has perfected (*teteleioken*) forever the ones who are sanctified." The use of forever in this context is unique. Usually the Greek uses a phrase meaning "to the ages." Here the phrase is "into the continuous" or "into the perpetuity" (there is no single Greek word for "forever.") The point here is that Christ has perfected for all eternity, the people who are saved by Him. His death affected not only the sin relationship between us and God but also the salvation relationship. It is settled forever and it is a perfect (complete, fulfilled) settlement. The "one offering" points us to the death of Christ as the basis of sanctification and assurance.

The benediction of the book of Hebrews occurs in 13:20. Of special significance is the phrase, "through the blood of the everlasting covenant." This phrase confirms a number of items of usual theological speculation. There is an everlasting covenant. The terms indicate a legal-contractual arrangement. The crux of the covenant, the hinge that stands as fulfillment and demands fulfillment by the first party, is the blood of the covenant. Jesus' death (the shedding of his blood or giving of His life) for mankind was the demanded item. Since it has been accomplished the Father is seen as necessarily carrying out the efficient work of salvation. Here is specified the fact of the resurrection as one element of the Father's agreed work. This extended treatment of the atonement in Hebrews concludes with the idea that Jesus fully accomplished His side of the contract, He came and died. Now the Father is morally able and legally obliged to provide salvation and new life. Note that in the first part of verse 20 God is

described as a God of peace. Now that Christ has paid for sin our holy God can relate to us in peace.

By way of conclusion of this section we shall look at a summary of the teaching of Hebrews on the atonement. The atonement is the subject of a contract between the members of the trinity in which each fulfills a role (7:22; 9:15; 13:20). The Father agreed to save (some or all of) those for whom Christ died. Jesus agreed to die for the sins of humanity, once for all. The Spirit agreed to be the agent in empowering Jesus as the perfect man and to be God's agent in bringing salvation to men. Thus Jesus serves as the guarantee of our new covenant relationship, based on His death and God's grace rather than upon our works (1:3; 7:25; 9:14, 15; 10:14). Jesus' death paid for sins once for all, for all men, and provided satisfaction to God's holy nature, cancelled the effects of sin and its power in our lives, and perfected us and our relationship to God as believers (1:3; 2:9, 17; 5:9; 9:26; 10:14).

In order to gain an overview of the New Testament teaching regarding salvation a summary by topics is necessary. This will include three topics: the death of Christ, the atonement and faith.

B. Major Topics

1. The Death of Christ

The death of Christ is the central theme of all Scripture. R. A. Torrey (*What the Bible Teaches*) states that there are over 175 distinct references in the New Testament (and over 333 in the Old Testament) to the death of Christ. The Old Testament prophecies include Psalm 22, Psalm 69, Isaiah 53, Daniel 9, and Zechariah 12 and 13. Observe that the Son of God in the New Testament is the Servant of God in the Old Testament.

Jesus did not say a great deal about His death. He did not come to talk about dying, but

to die. He was not proclaiming the message of His death so much as He was providing it (however, see Matthew 16:21. Note that this beginning of systematic teaching on this subject was not His first reference to it. See John 5:51; 10:10-16; for other early references. In the epistles the key statement is 1 Corinthians 2:1-2. The teaching is prominent in Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, especially in Hebrews, and in 1 Peter and 1 John. In the book of Revelation the frequent references (22 in all) to Christ as the Lamb of God show the importance of the slain Christ to this book. See especially Revelation 5:9,10.

The death of Christ was the first truth in apostolic preaching. The search for the Kerygma of the early Church focuses on 1 Corinthians 15:1-3. In this passage it is clear that Paul's (and in Acts 10:35-43, Peter's) gospel was a message about a person, Jesus Christ, who died according to the Scriptures and who arose from the dead.

What was accomplished when Jesus died? It is a staggering subject. Nothing in the universe was unaffected by it.

- 1) Results in relation to believers:
 - Galatians 3:13 redeemed from the curse
 - Revelation 1 :5 loosed from sin
 - Revelation 3:9 purchased by Christ
 - Ephesians 2:13 drawn near to God
 - John 3:14-15 have eternal life
 - Romans 5:9 justified
 - Hebrews 10:10 sanctified
 - Hebrews 10:14 perfect forever
 - 1 John 1:7 continually cleansed

6. 1 John 4:10 and sent His Son as a propitiation concerning our sins

The above verses exhaust the references in the New Testament.

The atoning death of Christ, as a revelation of God, is a thing in itself so intelligible, so correspondent to a universal need, so direct and universal in its appeal, that it must be the basis of a universal religion. It is so far from being a truth (if we can speak of truth on such terms) relative only to one race, or one upbringing, or one age, or one set of prejudices, that it is the one truth which for all races and in all ages can never admit of any qualification.³⁵

Christ is the public means by which sinners can find their sins forgiven and a new relation to the Father open. Christ removed wrath against sin, for us believers and for the world. The only other point exegetically mentioned is that propitiation is applied personally through faith in His blood.

Not only must atonement by the death of Christ be preached if we would preach the New Testament gospel, but the characteristics of the atonement must be clearly reflected in the preaching if justice is to be done to the gospel. As the finished work of Christ the atonement is complete, and the perfection which belongs to it belongs also to the new relation to God into which we enter when the atonement is appropriated by faith. A relation to God in which sin has nothing to say, but which is summed up in Christ and His perfect atonement for sin - in John Wesley's words, full salvation now - is the burden of the gospel.³⁶

The meaning of propitiation is: as I trust that Christ died for me and for my sins, God removes His wrath from me.

God loves the sinner but He hates the sin. Since God does not intend to leave man in sin, Christ

must bear the penalty for us. Thus propitiation comes from God's love. It includes the ideas of satisfaction, justice, appeasement of wrath, and substitution. "It is a death for sin, whatever else may be said of it."³⁷ The grace of God, stemming from His love, is all the more marvelous because it cost the life of His Son. Forgiveness is the action the Father wishes to take, and now can because of the Son. "The blood, and the blood alone put away sin, and permitted that man to come to God's courts to worship, because it made him one with God."³⁸

b. Reconciliation: When Christ died for our sins He accomplished more than making wrath turn aside. He also brought each believer into a good relationship with the Father.

Katallage (the Greek word translated "reconciliation")

1. Romans 5:10, 11
2. Romans 11:5
3. 1 Corinthians 7:11
4. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20
5. Ephesians 2:16
6. Colossians 1:20

Neither God nor man is changed by this event, but the relation between God and man is changed. But when the soul closes with Christ the propitiation, the assurance of God's love is laid at the foundation of its being once for all.³⁹

Two of the scripture passages speak about reconciling the world to God. It calls upon men to put everything else aside and be reconciled to God as a first priority. If scripture speaks of receiving the reconciliation, then the reconciliation is a means to fellowship with God. Reconciliation implies either that God is the initiator in the process or that there is an intermediary, Christ.

c. Redemption. The final set of verses include more of an Old Testament idea.

1. Luke 21:28
2. Romans 3:24
3. Romans 8:23
4. 1 Corinthians 1:30
5. Ephesians 1:7
6. Ephesians 1:14
7. Ephesians 4:30
8. Colossians 1:14
9. Hebrews 11:35
10. Hebrews 11:35

The basic idea is that Christ bought us by paying a price. Surprisingly there is still some division in systematic theologies concerning who Christ bought us from. Did He purchase us from Satan, from sin's dominion, or from self-bondage? Scripture says Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. I now have freedom from being cursed. Thus, in addition to the removal of wrath (personal judgment) there is also the removal of the curse (judicial judgment). This implies that the curse, placed upon us by God, is gone.

d. Conclusion. The point is clearly established. Since God loves, He acts. In acting in regard to sin and its result and to man as sinner, God hates the sin and loves the sinner. He therefore in love provided a means of removing His wrath, removing the curse and reconciling the world to himself. The curse was paid and the slave is free. Wrath is removed and free, loving access is open.

Therewith Jesus' death is understood as the culmination of God's condescension,

of the divine offer of the forgiveness of sins, and precisely for this reason as a crucial part of the eschatological salvation event; in this it becomes evident that, in the last analysis, the primitive community's confession of the final salvation that has begun in Jesus Christ is meant to bear witness to God's love which we encounter in Jesus, the love which draws the believer into this divine loving activity⁴⁰

God is no longer hostile or separated from the world, only from those who maintain the separation as their choice.

To say that God willed that men be saved through the death of His Son is the same as to say that He loved men so greatly that He saved them through the death of His Son. The divine will is not to be separated from the divine love.⁴¹

The cross is the only means to new life, but it freely offered to all by our loving Father.

3. Faith

The subject of faith has been seen in each section of the New Testament. Faith is not a blind leap in the dark. Packer describes the alternative.

If there is uncertainty, this is the conflict of faith and unbelief in the human heart-- it has nothing to do with the facts. And the right thing to say about faith in itself is not that it is a leap in the dark, without knowing whether there are any facts, any realities to undergird it, but rather that it is a step in the light of the sure word and the promises of God.⁴²

This faith is active. It is a confident step beyond the limitations of this world based on the truth which has been revealed and received.

Kummel adds this concerning the promise and faith:

On the basis of the belief in the resurrection of the crucified one, and on the basis of the experience of the gift of the Spirit, the primitive community extended this claim of Jesus to say that the promised bearer of salvation of the end-time already now as the heavenly Lord rules his eschatological community; in it are assembled those who, in faith in the Lord who is even now presently at work, are already experiencing together the reality of the final salvation that is promised to them.⁴³

This life of faith has two particular results for believers.

The first transition is from wrath to grace, from being under God's wrath to being under His grace. This transition is marked in the Scriptures as being justification. There is also the transition from death to life. Death is unresponsiveness to God, and the deprivation of all the fulfillment that God meant one to have. Life is the state of restored fellowship with God and fulfillment and joy thence resulting.⁴⁴

Thus salvation by faith means that new life is now available. All born-again Christians have made these transitions and entered into this new life.

Another point of discussion concerns the origin of faith. Biblical perspectives have always placed the origin of faith with God.

Everyone who is eventually saved can only ascribe his salvation from the first step to the last to God's favour and act. Human merit must be excluded: and this can only be by tracing back the work far beyond the obedience which evidenced, or even the faith which appropriates salvation; even to an act of spontaneous favour on the God who foresees and foreordains from eternity all His works.

Notice also that the purpose of the divine predestination is not favouritism, but holiness, Christlikeness.⁴⁵

Ryrie says,

The act of believing is through grace and therefore is rooted in the eternal counsels of God. Belief, though a human act, is nonetheless accomplished through the grace of God (18:27), and those who believed had already been enrolled or set in the rank of ones having eternal life (13:48; cf. II Tim. 3:11 for the same word).⁴⁶

In this way salvation is clearly a central thought in the mind of God. The entire plan was foreordained by God before the foundation of the world (Hebrews 13:20; I Peter 1:20). The distinction between foreknowledge and predestination is described by Stott as, "God's electing choice formed in His mind before He willed it. His decision preceded His decree."⁴⁷

The historical interpretations concerning the origin of faith have been summarized by Woodbridge.

Virtually all the earliest evangelicals such as Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, Crammer, Ames, Cotton, to a lesser degree Spener and Wesley, and to the purest degree Edwards, Hodge, and Warfield believed that the biblical evangel was the message of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. The stress on the sovereign initiative of God in first providing salvation and then in disposing the sinner to receive it was never believed to undermine the place of human responsibility. For the theology of the Reformation is notable for the care with which sovereignty and responsibility are mutually upheld, paradoxical as this may appear. Nor, indeed, was the stress on God's initiative designed to circumvent or eliminate the activity of evangelism. On the contrary, it was seen as the *sine qua non* of all evangelism. Without God's gracious interposition, the preaching of the

gospel will always be fruitless. God's sovereignty undergirds evangelism; it does not undermine it. But in the practice of evangelism since Finney's day, the notion of human responsibility has been greatly enlarged and changed. The price which has had to be paid is a diminished doctrine of grace. Although contemporary evangelists have recoiled from some of Finney's distortions, the evangel is still presented as being of divine origin but it is seen as needing human cooperation for its realization. The initiative of God in disposing man to receive the gospel is not only seen as unnecessary but some view it as pernicious since the freedom of man is thereby violated. The dilemma of relating man's moral inability to his ethical responsibility is not new to this generation of evangelicals, nor are some of the solutions that have emerged. But it is clear that the view common to the Protestant Reformers, which was held with remarkable unanimity, has undergone serious modifications.⁴⁸

4. Conclusion

A return to biblical teaching is necessary. In the complexity of the world today and in the midst of the many attacks on the gospel from Pelagian sources and worse, it is not enough to fight for Reformed or Arminian or covenantal or dispensational truth. The church must defend truth as biblical and thus maintain the authority of God's Word, not of a particular systematic theology.

If the origin of faith is in God, the New Testament is also clear that faith as received is an active event. "The way of salvation does not depend on anything that we do, but only on what Christ has done for us. Yet paradoxically, unless we make our response we do not receive His good gift."⁴⁹ Faith is the means by which the believer identifies himself with Christ. He reckons

himself to be dead to sin and alive to God. He ceases to rely on his own efforts and instead relies on what God has done for him in Christ. "Faith means trusting Christ, Christ alone for full salvation."⁵⁰ But this coming to Christ, "can become a personal reality for us only if we so allow ourselves to be grasped by God's love that has come to us in Jesus Christ that we become new persons."⁵¹ Of course the activity of marking us new persons is what God does as He has chosen to do, when we believe in Jesus Christ. Stott calls this the "self surrender of faith."⁵²

The final point to make concerning faith is that it is expressed only by people who have become conscious of a need for a savior.

Faith presented as the way of receiving salvation only becomes a relevant issue for those who become conscious that for one reason or another they need God's salvation. The New Testament has much to say about this.⁵³

When an unbeliever is challenged with the gospel and the Holy Spirit convicts, the person responds by trusting Christ. Salvation and Savior are grasped by faith.

Footnotes

¹J. I. Packer, "Way of Salvation", *Bibliothecasacra* (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1972), p. 2404.

²F. F. Bruce, *New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans' 1968), p. 33-34.

³James Denney, *The Death of Christ* (London: Tyndale Press, 1951), p. 37.

⁴Packer, p. 199.

⁵J. B. Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), p. 241.

⁶C. C. Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), p. 123.

⁷Ryrie, p. 131.

⁸Denney, p. 173.

⁹G. Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans' 1968), p. 325.

¹⁰Howard Marshall, *The Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), p. 33.

¹¹Ryrie, p. 340.

¹²W. C. Kummel, *The Theology of the New Testament*, trans. John F. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974), p. 328.

¹³Kummel, p. 325.

¹⁴Kummel, p. 326.

¹⁵Marshall, p. 36-37.

¹⁶Bruce, p. 49.

¹⁷Denney, p. 24-25.

¹⁸Marshall, p. 43.

¹⁹Denney, p. 49-50.

²⁰Marshall, p. 43.

²¹Packer, p. 196.

²²John Stott, *Men Made New* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1966), p. 18.

²³Marshall, p. 36.

²⁴C. H. Spurgeon, *The Passion and Death of Christ*, reprinted (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans' 1966), p. 144.

²⁵Packer, p. 201

²⁶Ryrie, p. 185.

²⁷Spurgeon, p. 73.

²⁸Denney, p. 132.

²⁹Marshall, p. 94.

³⁰W. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972),
p. 81-83.

³¹James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p.
47.

³²L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*. Vol. 3 (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1955), p. 56.

³³Marshall, p. 97.

³⁴ibid., 94-95.

³⁵Denney, p. 71

³⁶ibid., p. 152.

³⁷ ibid., p. 75.

³⁸Spurgeon, p. 35-36.

³⁹Denney, p. 162.

⁴⁰Kummel, p. 331.

⁴¹Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 370.

⁴²Packer, p. 306.

⁴³Kummel, p. 330-331.

⁴⁴Packer, p. 243.

⁴⁵Stott, p101-102.

⁴⁶Ryrie, p. 116.

⁴⁷Stott, p. 101.

⁴⁸D. Wells and J. Woodbridge, *The Evangelicais* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), p. 27-28.

⁴⁹Morris, p. 390.

⁵⁰ibid., 391.

⁵¹Kummel , p. 333.

⁵²Stott, p. 56.

⁵³Packer, p. 297.

Chapter 4

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION IN REFORMED THEOLOGY

A. Introduction

The Reformed system of understanding salvation finds its initial development in John Calvin. In his *Institutes* Calvin wrote,

Doctrine is not an affair of the tongue, but of the life; is not apprehended by the intellect and memory merely, like other branches of learning; but is received only when it possessed the whole soul, and finds its seat and habitation in the inmost recesses of the heart.¹

Many twentieth century authors, even non-Calvinists, hold the same view. Saucy writes,

Theology, all will agree, aims at nothing short of the transformation of life. But unless it is done in a manner which conveys a genuine experiential dimension, it fails of its goal. The theology which captures the minds of men has always been that which springs from the heart engaged with the practical needs of a living faith.²

In light of this goal, that theology speak to life, it is now the purpose to examine Reformed theology on the doctrine of salvation.

Within the general framework of modern evangelical theology there are three main positions in relation to biblical teaching on salvation: Lutheran, Reformed and Arminian.³ In this usage “Reformed” is a broad term.

The major speakers in the Reformed circles in this century are Benjamin Warfield and Louis Berkhof. Much of the material for this study is taken from Calvin, Warfield, and Berkhof. Since this study of theology should be practical it will treat those topics on which there is broad

consensus and detail only the topics on which there is some disagreement.

B. A System of Reformed Theology

Augustine is the figure to whom most Reformed theologians trace their theological origin. Augustine was one of the first writers to try to develop an overall theology.

It might fairly be said that his [Augustine's] entire growth is simply a logical development of his fundamental material principle of dependence on God under the guidance of his other formal principle of the authority of Scripture.⁴

This development of the material and formal principles for Augustine did not stop him from endorsing the general theological teachings of Rome. He saw the theology of grace and traditional Catholic formulations as one body of doctrine. Implicit in his theology, however, was the contradiction which was brought to light in the Reformation. Warfield says, "For the Reformation, inwardly considered, was just the ultimate triumph of Augustin's doctrine of grace over Augustine's doctrine of the Church."⁶ Thus, while Augustine was in a sense the first Reformed theologian, he was also a strong proponent of a system of theological and ecclesiastical method which led to the weakening of his doctrine of salvation.

Luther was outraged by the discrepancy between the verbal position of the Roman Church and the daily walk of its priests. His trip to Rome was the major step in directing him to another theological position. His desired reform of the church's theology and life was impossible, given the events and personalities of the day. Only in a break from Rome could the reform properly be accomplished. His fundamental difference with Rome concerned the nature of man. What is the nature of man's lostness? Is man free to respond to grace, or must even his response be the work of God? Many of these questions were answered in his book, *The Bondage of the Will* (*De servo arbitrio*, 1525), which is regarded by most scholars as not only Luther's

most important work in relation to his teaching of the bondage of the will, but also, theologically his most important work, because it touches directly or indirectly on all of Luther's theological thought.⁷

Calvin was deeply indebted to Luther for the fundamentals of his theology.

And this Augustinianism is taught by him [Calvin] not as an independent discovery of his own, but fundamentally as he learned it from Luther, whose fertile conceptions he completely assimilated, and most directly and in much detail from Martin Bucer into whose practical, ethical point of view he perfectly entered.⁸

But Calvin developed the reformation theology along different lines from Luther and Bucer. Calvin saw the doctrine of God, rather than the doctrine of man, as the point to diverge from Romanism. The emphasis Calvin placed on the sovereignty of God led directly to the major points in the development of his systematic theology.

More important than Calvin himself, for our study, is the position known as Calvinism or Reformed theology. Historically there are five streams which led to contemporary Calvinism: 1) the Pilgrims and Puritans; 2) the Dutch Reformed Church; 3) the French Huguenots; 4) the German Reformed churches; 5) the Scottish Reformed churches.⁹

Calvinism in American today is a "struggling remnant." Organizationally there are only five or six denominations that are still quite thoroughly imbued with Calvinism.

1. Christian Reformed
2. Orthodox Presbyterian Church
3. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America

4. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
5. Evangelical Presbyterian Church
6. Reformed Church in the United States.¹⁰

The theological distinctives of Calvinism are described by Warfield.

Calvinism insists that the saving operations of God are directed in every case immediately to the individuals who are saved. Particularism in the process of salvation becomes thus the mark of Calvinism.¹¹

In more general terms he continues,

If we wish to reduce this statement to a more formal theoretical form, we may say perhaps, that Calvinism in its fundamental idea implies three things. In it: (i) objectively speaking, theism comes to its rights; (ii) subjectively speaking, the religious relation attains its purity; (iii) soteriologically speaking, evangelical religion finds at length its full expression and its secure stability.¹²

The result of this interplay of historical development and theological position has resulted in clear definitions. Negatively Kuyper defines Calvinism as, "The channel in which the Reformation moved so far as it was neither Lutheran nor Anabaptist nor Socinian."¹³

More positively Gerstner said that Calvinism is, "The irreducible and distinctive system of truth embodied in the Reformed standards."¹⁴ These standards are the various creeds and confessions of the Reformed churches through the centuries. The usually designated high point of Reformed theology as a system is the *Westminster Confession of Faith*.

Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) was a Reformed pastor and theologian who led a movement to modify Reformed theology. Just one year after his death the beliefs of this group were set forth in the *Remonstrance Articles*.

The creed of the Arminians was set forth in the *Remonstrance Articles* addressed in 1610 to the States of Holland and West Friesland, the document which gave to them the name of Remonstrants. It consists of five Articles. The first asserts conditional election, or election dependent on the foreknowledge of faith. The second asserts universal atonement, in the sense that it is intended, although it is not actually efficient, for all. The third affirms the inability of men to exercise saving faith, or to accomplish anything really good without regeneration through the Holy Spirit. The fourth declares that although grace at every step of the spiritual life is indispensable, it is yet not irresistible. The fifth pronounces the perseverance of all believers doubtful. Later, the Arminians went further on this last point, maintaining that believers may fall from grace finally.¹⁵

This has been summarized by Roger Nicole under five points: 1) God elects or reprobates on the basis of foreseen faith or unbelief; 2) Christ died for all men and for every man, although only believers are saved; 3) Man is so depraved that divine grace is necessary unto faith or any good deed; 4) This grace may be resisted; 5) Whether all who are truly regenerate will certainly persevere in the faith is a point which needs further investigation.¹⁶

Whether Arminian theologians accept these descriptions of their position is not at issue here. This is the description used by Reformed writers.

Reformed theology, in opposing Arminianism, expounded five points: 1) the depravity of men is such that he will never turn to God of his own accord; 2) election to salvation is based solely on the good pleasure and mercy of God; 3) Christ died for those elect only and actually secured their salvation; 4) the salvation of the elect is effectively applied in their lives so that they believe; 5) regenerate believers are preserved in salvation by the grace of God and they

will never perish.

However, the French school of Saumur in 1633 became the center of the development of a modified system of Reformed theology variously called Amaranthian or post-redemptionism. It is characterized by belief in a universal atonement.¹⁷ This is achieved theologically by changing the order of decrees so that the atonement precedes election. Thus the particularism which characterizes Reformed theology is delayed. The atonement, while resulting in the salvation of some due to election, is intended for all men. This position has been condemned by a few councils but has been accepted as within the bounds of “proper Calvinism” by others.¹⁸

Warfield held the chair in Systematic Theology at Princeton Seminary in the early 1900's. Although he never wrote a systematic theology as such, he is respected as one of the major speakers for Reformed theology in modern times. J. Marcellus Kik, in the foreword to one of Warfield's books, wrote,

In the minds of not a few, Warfield is one of the outstanding theologians since Calvin. Because of his lucid and stately style of writing, his penetrating gift of analysis, his knowledge of the works of Calvin and Augustine, and his firm grasp of Reformed theology, there was no one better qualified to estimate and express the unique place of Calvin and Augustine in the history of the Christian Church.¹⁹

Thus Warfield's definitions and position statements are very influential. His writings will be of major importance in tracing the development of Calvinism between 1580-1910.

The final figure we shall discuss in outlining the system of Reformed theology is Louis Berkhof. Berkhof is the president of Calvin Seminary. His *Systematic Theology* is the contemporary classic. The position he takes is representative of the conservative right wing of Reformed theology.

C. Salvation by Grace

The testimony of scripture is that salvation is by grace. The means by which salvation is secured and applied is the grace of God. "In everything which enters into the process of redemption it is impelled by the force of its first principle to place the initiative in God."²⁰ This initiative comes not from a sense of obligation on God's part but as a free gift to man. The scriptural terms for the cause of God's action are his love (Ephesians 2:4,7) and his good pleasure (Ephesians 1:5,11).

This concept of salvation by grace was a major factor in Luther's theology. "It is possible to trace the progress of Luther's mind, step by step, from the year 1513, until he reached a distinct preception and firm grasp of the doctrine that salvation from beginning to end, is an absolutely free gift of God's grace."²¹ Some of the clearest statements of Luther's position came in his controversies. In his debate with Erasmus he stated the position well.

It is, then, fundamentally necessary and wholesome for Christians to know that God foreknows nothing contingently, but that He foresees, purposes, and does all things according to his own immutable, eternal and infallible will. This bombshell knocks "free-will" flat, and utterly shatters it.²²

This view of grace as the free-unmerited favor of God stemming from His love is also found in Calvin and John Wesley. Calvin writes,

"I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy" (Hosea 2:19, 23). If a covenant of this kind, evidently forming our first union with God, depends on mercy, there is no foundation left for our righteousness. And, indeed, I would fain know₁ from those who pretend that man meets God with some righteousness of works, whether they imagine there is any kind of righteousness save that which is

acceptable to him. If it were insane to think so, can anything agreeable to God proceed from his enemies, whom he abominates with all their deeds? Truth declares that we are all the avowed and inveterate enemies of God until we are justified and admitted to his friendship (Romans 5:6; Colossians 1:21).²³

Wesley states,

All the blessings which God hath bestowed upon man are of his mere grace, bounty, or favor; his free undeserved favor; man having no claim to the least of his mercies.... There is nothing we are or have to do which can deserve the least thing at God's hands.²⁴

For many reformed theologians the discussion of grace is developed in terms of how God relates to man. This discussion centers on the conditions of the covenants.

If we stress the covenant responsibilities only or excessively, and fail to give due prominence to the fact that in the covenant God gives whatsoever He demands of us, in other words, that his promises cover all His requirements, we are in danger of falling into the snare of Arminianism.²⁵

The actual fulfillment of the covenants, including individual salvation is assured. "Since these promises were given by grace and are in no wise conditional for their fulfillment upon human acts, these covenants will be fulfilled in time."²⁶

Because of this relationship of the covenants to the sovereign action of God many theologians see the continuity factor as overwhelming. The Old Testament and the New Testament covenants are alike the result of grace, and their fulfillment will be the work of grace.

Luther concludes his discussions of Abraham saying,

So then, this passage serves to confirm the doctrine of God's free grace against the error of human merit . . . However the Almighty God by His grace made him to be something, namely, one who was freed from sin, death and everlasting damnation . . .²⁷

Thus Luther relates the doctrine of grace to the practical matter of salvation.

The reason for the necessity of grace is found in the sin of man. Culver says, Sin is essentially a missing. Or, reflecting several other Old Testament occurrences, it is falling short, neglect, or fault. It is failure to measure up to the standards of behavior and accomplishment set forth by our holy loving God.²⁸

This sin originated with Adam. He was innocent in the garden and had the choice to obey God or to sin by disobedience. Calvin comments,

Adam, therefore, might have stood if he chose, since it was only by his own will that he fell; but it was because his will was pliable in either direction and he had not received constancy to persevere, that he so easily fell. Still he had a free choice of good and evil; and not only so, but in the mind and will there was the highest rectitude, and all the organic parts were duly framed to obedience, until man corrupted its good properties, and destroyed himself.²⁹

Was this first sin predestined? Or did man have free choice in the situation? This is the same question as, 'was God's decree of the fall sovereign or permissive'? "Supralapsarians have said man was predestined; infralapsarians have held the latter position with equal determinism."³⁰

Man's fall into sin had many consequences. Man is spiritually dead (separated from God) and facing physical death. He is under the dominion of Satan. He has no hope of escape from sin and its consequences, apart from Christ.

Another question concerns the nature of the corruption of the image of God in man.

Calvin spoke clearly to this issue.

Although we grant that the image of God was not utterly effaced and destroyed in him, it was, however, so corrupted, that any thing which remains is fearful deformity; and, therefore, our deliverance begins with that renovation which we obtain from Christ . . . ³¹

The Bible gives a sevenfold answer to the question of what God did before the foundation of this world.

1. God had been in loving dialogue with his Son.
2. God had created the angels and stars.
3. God had settled the counsel of salvation for each individual.
4. God planned for the church - the body of Christ.
5. God prepared the kingdom of his own.
6. God had appointed Jesus to be the Mediator of salvation.
7. The Son was willing to carry out the work of redemption.³²

Numbers 3-7 above relates to an agreement between the members of the Trinity. This arrangement has been described as a covenant (Hebrews 13:20, etc.).

There are scriptural and logical reasons for thinking that the various actions of the plan and process of redemption took place in a certain order.³³ Glorification should follow sanctification and sanctification should follow justification. John 3:3-5 indicates that access into the kingdom of God must be preceded by regeneration. John 1:12 shows that adoption follows faith. Ephesians 1:13 says that sealing follows faith. Romans 8:30 enumerates the order: predestination, calling, justification, and glorification.

A further logical sequence is that these steps of relating salvation to man should be preceded by the purchasing of salvation by Jesus Christ. The complete sequence of the plan of God for dealing with man is called the covenant of grace (or the eternal covenant, or the covenant of redemption). Shedd distinguishes between a covenant of grace pertaining to all of God's works and a covenant of redemption particularly. But he affirms that the two titles are parts of one covenant. "Though this distinction (between the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace) is favored by Scripture statements, it does not follow that there are two separate and independent covenants antithetic to the covenant of works. The covenants of grace and redemption are two modes or phases of the one evangelical covenant of mercy."³⁴

Warfield identifies the covenant of grace and the Order of Decrees (usually thought to be only the decrees pertaining to the application of salvation).³⁵ But most other Reformed writers follow the traditional limitation of the title: the Order of Decrees.

Berkhof defines the Reformed, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic positions on the order of decrees. Because of its importance it is quoted at length.

Proceeding on the assumption that man's spiritual condition depends on his state, that is, on his relation to the law; and that it is only on the basis of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ that the sinner can be delivered from the corrupting and destructive influence of sin, Reformed soteriology takes its starting point in the union established in the *pactum salutis* between Christ and those whom the Father has given Him, in virtue of which there is an eternal imputation of the righteousness of Christ to those who are His. In view of this precedence of the legal over the moral some theologians, such as Maccovius, Comrie, A. Kuyper Sr., and A. Kuyper Jr., begin the *ordo salutis* with justification rather than

regeneration.

In doing this they apply the name "justification" also the ideal imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the elect in the eternal counsel of God. Dr. Kuyper further says that the Reformed differ from the Lutherans in that the former teach justification *per meritum Christi*, while the latter represent the justification *per fidem* as completing the work of Christ. The great majority of Reformed theologians, however, while presupposing the imputation of the righteousness of Christ in the *pactum salutis*, discuss only justification by faith in the order of salvation, and naturally take up its discussion in connection with or immediately after that of faith. They begin the *ordo salutis* with regeneration or with calling, and thus emphasize the fact that the application of the redemptive work of Christ is in its incipiency a work of God. This is followed by a discussion of conversion, in which the work of regeneration penetrates to the conscious life of the sinner, and he turns from self, the world, and Satan, to God. Conversion includes repentance and faith, but because of its great importance the latter is generally treated separately. The discussion of faith naturally leads to that of justification, inasmuch as this is mediated to us by faith. And because justification places man in a new relation to God, which carries with it the gift of the Spirit of adoption, and which obliges man to a new obedience and also enables him to do the will of God from the heart, the work of sanctification next comes into consideration. Finally, the order of salvation is concluded with the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and their final glorification.³⁷

Lutherans, while not denying the doctrines of election, the mystical union, and the

imputation of the righteousness of Christ, do not take their starting point in any one of these. They fully recognize the fact that the subjective realization of the work of redemption in the hearts and lives of sinners is a work of divine grace, but at the same time give a representation of the *ordo salutis* which places the main emphasis on what is done *a parte hominis* (on the part of man) rather than on what is done *a parte dei* (on the part of God). They see in faith first of all a gift of God, but at the same time make faith, regarded more particularly as an active principle in man and as an activity of man, the all-determining factor in their order of salvation. ... Attention was already called to the fact that Kaftan regards faith as the whole of the *ordo salutis*. This emphasis on faith as an active principle is undoubtedly due to the fact that in the Lutheran Reformation the doctrine of justification by faith--often called the material principle of the Reformation--was very much in the foreground. According to Pieper the Lutheran takes his starting point in the fact that in Christ God is reconciled to the world of humanity. God announces this fact to man in the gospel and offers to put man subjectively in possession of that forgiveness of sins or justification which was objectively wrought in Christ.³⁸

In Roman Catholic theology the doctrine of the Church precedes the discussion of the *ordo salutis*. Children are regenerated by baptism, but they who first become acquainted with the gospel in later life receive a *gratia sufficiens*, consisting in an illumination of the mind and a strengthening of the will. Man can resist this grace, but can also assent to it. If he assents to it, it turns into a *gratia cooperans*, in which man cooperates to prepare himself for justification. This preparation

consists of a believing acceptance of the Word of God, an insight into one's sinful condition, hope in the mercy of God, the beginning of love to God, an abhorrence of sin, a resolve to obey the commandments of God, and a desire for baptism. It is quite evident that faith does not occupy a central place here, but is simply coordinated with the other preparations. It is merely an intellectual assent to the doctrines of the Church (*fides informis*) and acquires its justifying power only through the love that is imparted in the *gratia infus* (*fides caritate formata*). It can be called justifying faith only in the sense that is the basis and root of all justification as the first of the preparations named above. After this preparation justification itself follows in baptism. This consists in the infusion of grace, of supernatural virtues, followed by the forgiveness of sins.³⁹

The larger covenant of grace is unconditional as it speaks to mankind. God Himself fulfilled all the requirements of the covenant. The covenant demands nothing from men. On the other hand there is a condition for the fulfillment of the covenant. "There is a sense in which the covenant is conditional. If we consider the basis of the covenant, it is clearly conditional on the suretyship of Jesus Christ."⁴⁰

The work of Jesus Christ is central to redemption and the fulfillment of the plan of God for all the ages. It is the only condition. The position of Christ in the covenant is twofold: In the first place He is the guarantee (*egguos*). A person as a guarantee is one who has become solely responsible for the legal obligations which pertain to someone else. Second, he is the official head of all persons for whom he acts.

In the covenant of redemption Christ undertook to atone for the sins of His people by bearing the necessary punishment, and to meet the demands of the law for

them. And by taking the place of delinquent man He became the last Adam, and is as such also the head of the covenant, the Representative of all those whom the Father has given him.⁴¹

In order of the decrees in the covenant of grace is variously given. The following is a list of five major positions. The name of a representative of each position is listed in parentheses.

1. Supralapsarian (Berkhof)
 - A. Uncouditional, particular election
 - B. Particular effective atonement
 - C. Irresistable grace
2. Sublapsarian (Strong)
 - A. Unlimited atonement
 - B. Unconditional, particular election
 - C. Irresistable grace
3. Evangelical (Thiessen)
 - A. Unlimited atonement
 - B. Unconditional election
 - C. Irresistable particular grace
4. Moderate Arminian (Watson)
 - A. Unlimited atonement
 - B. Unconditional general election
 - C. Resistable grace
5. Strict Arminian (Wiley)
 - A. Unlimited atonement

- B. Conditional election
- C. Resistable gracious offer

Although Thiessen maintains that his position is in the general Calvinist camp, Warfield disagrees that this position can be consistently particular.

It is obvious that this is the lowest point in the order of decrees at which the decree of election can be introduced and the particularistic principle be retained at all. If the application of the redemption of Christ by the Holy Spirit be also made universalistic, that is to say, if the introduction of the particularistic principle be postponed to the actual issue of the saving process, then there is obviously no particularism at all in the divine operations looking to salvation.⁴²

The order of decrees in the covenant of grace is very important in distinguishing various theological positions, including at least three Reformed positions. The differences in defining terms in the purchase and application of atonement are partially a result of definition of scriptural terms due to emphasis and partially a result of theological presuppositions implied in the position taken in the covenant of grace.

The single possible biblical point of opposition to the system of grace is the Law given by Moses. Could a man be saved by meeting the requirements of the Law? "The end for which the law was given, was not to secure worshippers for itself, but to conduct them to Christ."⁴³ Was Christ actually foreknown by the Israelites? Yes, as to his being a person who would be savior.

From all this it is abundantly plain, that as the Lord cannot be propitious to the human race without a Mediator, Christ was always held forth to the holy Fathers under the Law as the object of their faith.⁴⁴

This knowledge of Christ came to them from two sources: the Law itself; and the sacrifices.

“The Law was a constant reminder of God's electing grace.”⁴⁵ He had chosen Israel and made them his special people as an act of grace. Thus sovereign election is the basis of the Law. But as man failed to keep the Law he was turned to the sacrifices as a means of salvation.

In those petitions (sacrifices) whether for immediate forgiveness or enduring salvation, there is often voiced this truth, that it will be of the grace of God, that it is not a reward of merit but a gift of grace.⁴⁶

As the revelation of God's redemptive work progressed the means by which God would culminate atonement was clarified.

Although they were required, in order to appease God, to approach him daily with new sacrifices, yet Isaiah promises, that all their sins would be expiated by one single sacrifice, and with this Daniel concurs (Is. 53:5; Dan. 9:26,27).⁴⁷

And though they had sadly degenerated, they never entirely lost the knowledge of this general principle, that God, by the hand of Christ, would be the deliverer of the Church, as he had promised to David.⁴⁸

This use of the Law and the sacrifices should not be thought of as new, or as a Reformed theology development. It is the way God intended in the first place. The conclusion as to the use of the Law points us back to the covenant of grace. Calvin said,

From what has been said above, it must now be clear that all whom, from the beginning of the world, God adopted as his particular people, were taken into covenant with him on the same conditions, and under the same bond of doctrine, as ourselves;... Grace, the merciful acts of God, is the foundation of all His decrees toward us.⁴⁹

D. The Purchase of Atonement

In this section we will discuss the work of Christ in making atonement possible to men. According to the Bible the reason for the atonement is found in the good pleasure and love of God.⁵⁰ This love led God to send Christ. Christ is the only means of salvation. "We need God incarnate for redemptive reasons. The whole incarnation, with all that pertains to it, is one great sacrament of redemption"⁵¹ Calvin outlines the various causes of the atonement.⁵²

Efficient cause--mercy and love of God

Material cause--Christ, our substitute

Final cause--God's righteousness and goodness demonstrated

Instrumental cause--faith in Christ as savior

Modern theories have attacked the biblical statement of the atonement.

The ultimate result (of liberal assault on the atonement) has been that the revolt from the conceptions of satisfaction, propitiation, expiation, sacrifice, reinforced continually by tendencies adverse to evangelical doctrine peculiar to our times, has grown steadily more and more widespread, and in some quarters more and more extreme, until it has issued in an immense confusion on this central doctrine of the gospel.⁵³

This insight as to the central destructiveness has most clearly been stated by Murray.

The question is precisely the reference of the death of Christ when this death is viewed as vicarious death, that is to say, as vicarious obedience, as substitutionary sacrifice, and expiation, as effective propitiation, reconciliation, and redemption.

In a word, it is the strict and proper connotation of the expression "died for" that must be kept in mind.⁵⁴

The various positions concerning the atonement, within the biblical frame-work, all maintain a

certain unity; Atonement has come to refer to the totality of the completed work of Christ. It is readily admitted that no one benefits from redemption until he believes in Christ.⁵⁵

The succeeding discussion will center on four points related to the atonement: satisfaction, propitiation, substitution, and the extent of the atonement. The reason for choosing these themes (rather than reconciliation, ransom, redemption) is that they were the points discussed at length in the historic Reformed theologies.

1. Satisfaction. There are six main theories concerning the value of the work of Christ in atonement.⁵⁶

- a. Terminating with Satan - triumph theory
- b. Terminating physically on man - mystical theory
- c. Terminating spiritually on man - moral theory
- d. Terminating on man and God - governmental theory
- e. Terminating on man - identification theory
- f. Terminating on God - satisfaction theory

It was not until the end of the eleventh century that the nature of the atonement was first thoroughly discussed. The main figure in that discussion was Anselm (d.1109). Anselm used the terms of Roman law to describe the atonement as a satisfaction to divine justice.⁵⁷ The righteousness and holiness of the divine nature and the guilt of man as a sinner before God are all fully recognized and dwelt with. Bernard and Abelard, who were contemporaries of Anselm, held to the old notion of a ransom to Satan and to a moral influence theory. Later, the Victorines, Bonaventura and Aquinas, as well as the Reformers, held the satisfaction view. Formal and complete development of this view took place under the teaching of the Reformers.

This statement of the objective nature of the atonement is important because it deals so

directly with the whole nature of salvation. Is man merely in need of a moral influence to rebuild his own life? Or does he need a savior to pay the price for him and satisfy all the requirements of God.⁵⁸

2. Propitiation. It is the combination of God's love for the sinner and his hatred of sin which leads to the doctrine of propitiation. Propitiation springs from the love of God as a means of reconciling God to the world.⁵⁹ Romans 3:25 says that God set forth Christ to be a propitiation.

Christ's death is then the only means by which divine justice could be satisfied. In this sense propitiation is the result to God of the satisfaction rendered by Christ. He is now able to exercise his love toward those who are sinners.

In light of this we must keep both the expiatory (removal of guilt from man) and the propitiatory (removal of the cause of wrath) ideas. The meaning of the word *hilaskomai* can bear either or both of these meanings.⁶⁰

3. Substitution. The Bible has two terms which indicate substitution.⁶¹ Jesus used the stronger of the two as He spoke to the disciples concerning His purpose in giving His life. "The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:23; Mark 10:45). "For the many" uses the term *anti*. This word clearly means 'in the place of' or 'instead of.' The other Greek word used to denote substitution is *huper*. The basic meaning is 'in behalf of' or 'for the benefit of.' In Luke 22:19-20 Jesus said that His body and blood were given 'for' us. In John 6:51 Jesus said, "and the bread also which I will give 'for' the life of the world is My flesh." The high point of the use of *huper* in a substitutionary sense is John 10:11; 11:50; 13:14; I Corinthians 15:3 where Christ is specifically said to die for all or for the sins of all. These theories of satisfaction, propitiation, and substitution all link together, Christ had to do something for me which I could not do. He had to remove the offense between me and God.

This He accomplished in His death.

4. The extent of the atonement. The extent of the atonement is much debated among Reformed theologians. Questions here do not concern Calvinism vs. Arminianism, Lightner puts it clearly,

Too often the determining of limited or unlimited atonement is pictured as a choice between Calvinism and Arminianism. It should be clearly understood that one need not be an Arminian simply because he rejects limited atonement. On the other hand, one is certainly not a Calvinist just because he accepts limited atonement.⁶²

Berkhof narrows the question, but clearly intends to take it out of the range of being thought of as only a theological systems question.

Did the Father in sending Christ, and did Christ in coming into the world, to make atonement for sin, do this with the design or for the purpose of saving only the elect or all men? That is the question, and that only is the question.⁶³

Of course, each author can frame the questions as he desires. But let us remain with Berkhof's formulation. The question has received three answers.

The most open Arminian view is that Christ's death not only provided salvation for all, it obtained salvation for all men. Thus every man possesses sufficient grace to make a decision. He can repent and believe if he will. This recognizes the reality and awfulness of sin, but sees the sin problem removed externally (guilt) and internally (depravity) by the death of Christ.

From the Confession of the Arminian Remonstrance comes this statement:

‘Although there is the greatest diversity in the degrees in which grace is bestowed in accordance with the Divine will, yet the Holy Spirit confers, or at least is ready to confer, upon all and each to whom the Word is ordinarily preached, as much

grace as is sufficient for generating faith and carrying forward their conversion in its successive stages.⁶⁴

Thus, the Arminian position declares freedom to man if he will only believe as he hears the gospel.

In direct opposition to this is the Reformed view. Hodge, Kuyper, Steele, John Owen, Berkhof, Warfield, and John Murray all hold to a 'limited atonement' position.⁶⁵ Murray says,

The doctrine of 'limited atonement' which we maintain is the doctrine which limits the atonement to those who are heirs of eternal life, to the elect. That limitation insures its efficacy and conserves its essential and effective redemption.⁶⁶

Specifically Berkhof says the things secured in the atonement were:

- 1) a proper judicial standing;
- 2) the mystical union with Christ;
- 3) final bliss in communion with God.⁶⁷

He includes justification, adoption, regeneration, sanctification, and glorification as things finally purchased for the elect by Christ.

But limited atonement theologians also assert that Christ's death accomplished only these things.⁶⁸ Their point of view sees these being decided at the time of the purchase of salvation rather than at the time of the application of the atonement by the Holy Spirit. Thus the positions of universal and limited atonement are in contradictory opposition.

However, a third position is being clearly delineated today.⁶⁹ This position does not have a formal name but uses the terms unlimited atonement or moderate Calvinist.

The moderate Calvinist view which we are seeking to present in these pages lies

between these two. Christ most certainly died to secure the salvation of those who believe--the elect--and it is our conviction that the Bible teaches that Christ died to provide a basis of salvation for all men. To those who are the elect and who therefore believe in Christ, this provision secures for them their eternal salvation, when they believe. For those who do not believe and thus evidence the fact that they are the non-elect, the provision exists as a basis of condemnation. The eternal destiny of men according to the Bible, is not determined by the extent of the atonement or by man's relationship to Adam and his sin, but by man's relationship to Jesus Christ who died for sin and sins--the root and the fruit (Rom. 6:10; 1 Cor. 15:3)⁷⁰

This position can be traced historically, with some surprising results. The fact is that the limited view was not popularly held until the Synod of Dort (1619) and Westminster Conference (1647).⁷¹

Irenaeus (130-202) wrote a treatise *Against heresies* in which he spoke of Christ's death. He said that Christ, ". . . gave himself as a redemption for those who had been led into captivity."⁷² Irenaeus had previously said that all men are sinners.

Luther himself held to this view.

What do you think he means by 'world'? Will you exempt any man from being so called, save him that is new created by the Holy Ghost? The use of this term, 'world', is characteristic of this apostle; and by it he simply means, the whole human race.⁷³

Luther was not alone on this. Melancthon, Osiander, Zwingli and Bucer held this doctrine of a general or unlimited atonement.⁷⁴

Finally, we find this view represented in the writings of Calvin himself. On John 3:16

Calvin says,

For God so loved the world. Christ opens up the first cause, and, as it were, the source of our salvation, and he does so, that no doubt may remain; for our minds cannot find calm repose, until we arrive at the unmerited love of God. As the whole matter of our salvation must not be sought anywhere else than in Christ, so we must see whence Christ came to us, and why he was offered to be our Savior. Both points are distinctly stated to us: namely, that faith in Christ brings life to all, and that Christ brought life, because the heavenly Father loves the human race, and wishes that they should not perish.⁷⁵

About Mark 14:24 Calvin says,

Which is shed for many. By the word many he means not a part of the world only, but the whole human race; for he contrasts many with one, as if he had said, that He will not be the redeemer of one man only, but will die in order to deliver many from the condemnation of the curse.⁷⁶

By way of conclusion to this section let us look at what Lightner says,

We observed that Scripture broadens the design of the atonement so as to include all men in a provisional way. That is, the benefits of Calvary are realized and applied only to those who believe, but the provision reached to every member of Adam's race. This is the uniform testimony of Scripture and especially of those central passages such as 2 Peter 2:1, I John 2:2, Romans 5 and II Corinthians 5, which deal respectively with the limited and unlimited sense of redemption, propitiation and reconciliation.⁷⁷

Conclusion

This study is sufficient to show that the system of Reformed theology is not only well thought out but that there is general consistency of definition. The decrees of the covenant of grace and the definition of terms in the Reformed theory of the atonement are determinative, largely in terms of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Many people try to retain the label Calvinist, or Reformed in a narrow sense, but disagree on one or more of these points. The testimony is too consistent to do this. While Calvin, and other Calvinists left some room open for differing definitions, the evidence is overwhelming to point to one general position as traditionally Calvinistic or Reformed. This system emphasizes the sovereignty of God and views salvation from the divine perspective only, often forgetting that God has also taken the responses of men into account in His predestination.

Footnotes

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³B. B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), p. 19.

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⁶*Ibid.*, *Calvin*, p. 322.

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²⁸Robert Culver, "What Sin is and How God Forgives It", Class Notes, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1968, p. 5.

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³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 420.

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Chapter 5

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION IN ARMINIAN THEOLOGY

A. Introduction

The Arminian system of doctrine found its primary development in Jacob (sometimes given as 'James') Arminius. In his Declaration of Sentiments in 1608 Arminius wrote,

In reference to Saving Grace, I believe, (1) it is a gratuitous affection by which God is kindly affected towards a miserable sinner, and according to which he, in the first place, gives his Son, "that whosoever believeth in him might have eternal life," and, afterwards, he justifies him in Christ Jesus and for his sake, and adopts him into the right of sons, unto salvation. (2.) It is an infusion into the human understanding and into the will and affections, of all those gifts of the Holy Spirit which appertain to the regeneration and renewing of man - such as faith hope, charity; for, without these gracious gifts, man is not sufficient to think, will, or do any thing that is good. (3.) It is that perpetual assistance and continued aid of the Holy Spirit, according to which it acts upon and excites to good the man who has been already renewed, by infusing into him salutary cogitation, and by inspiring him with good desires, that he may thus actually will and work together with man, that man may perform whatever he wills.¹

In thus stating his understanding of grace Arminius shows how close he is to Calvin's position.

The position of Arminius differed greatly from that of his followers, especially Limberch (1633-1702) and Curcellacus (1586-1659) on the issues of original sin and the application of grace.

Curcellacus, in the controversy at Dort, leaned too far toward Pelagianism. Wiley says,

We shall reserve the term "earlier Arminianism" as applying to the teachings of Arminius himself, and also to those teachings as reaffirmed by John Wesley (1703-1791). The

position of the Remonstrants is best known as "Later Arminianism." In its purest and best forms, Arminianism preserves the truth found in the Reformed teaching without accepting its errors.²

Starting with the theology of Calvin, there was a movement in the direction of scholasticising his position which led to what is sometimes called, "hyper-Calvinism." It is typified by the Synod of Dort and the Westminster Confession of Faith. Against this tendency was a reactionary movement which could not be called a return to Calvinism but to an avowed modification of it. This was represented by the Amyraldists and the later Arminians, but the latter must be regarded not merely as a modification of Reformed theology but a distant type of dogmatics. This leads us into the Calvinistic-Arminian controversy. The fight has gone on ever since.

The Arminian Controversy (1560-1619) dealt with the doctrine of grace. The followers of Arminius remonstrated against five points in the Calvinistic theology. The Arminians were excluded from the Reformed Church, and their teachings condemned by the Synod of Dort. The Arminian theology forms the basis of the Wesleyan teaching as held by the great body of Methodism. It is also the basis of the theology of the Church of England after the time of Bishop Cranmer.³

It is important to point out the limits of the discussion. The doctrine of justification by faith is not in question. Watson wrote,

It is an error, therefore, to suppose, as many have done, that the doctrine of justification by faith alone, is peculiarly a Calvinistic one. It is the doctrine, as we have seen, not of the Calvinistic confessions only, but of the Lutheran Church, and of the Church of England.⁴

Watson went on to include Arminian theology as one based on grace, not self-effort or works.

Even many 20th century writers are clear on this point.

The most important theological presupposition of all of us writing in this volume is our conviction that God is good in an unqualified manner, and that he desires the salvation of all sinners. To each human being God offers forgiveness in Jesus Christ and the gift of sonship.⁵

Thus Arminian theology is more divergent and less systematic in general than Reformed theology, while retaining the essential doctrine of faith.

It is worthwhile to quote at length an early understanding of the nature of the controversy.

THE FIVE POINTS OF CONTROVERSY

The doctrine of the Remonstrants is set forth in five propositions. These are known as the "Five Points of Controversy between the disciples of Arminius and Calvin." They are given by Mosheim as follows:

1. "That God, from all eternity, determined to bestow salvation on those who, as He foresaw, would persevere unto the end in their faith in Jesus Christ, and to inflict everlasting punishment on those who should continue in their unbelief, and resist, to the end of life, His divine succors."
2. "That Jesus Christ, by his death and suffering, made an atonement for the sins of mankind in general, and of every individual in particular; that, however, none but those who believe in him can be partakers of that divine benefit."
3. "That true faith cannot proceed from the exercise of our natural faculties and powers, or from the force and operation of free will, since man, in consequence of his natural corruption, is incapable of thinking or doing any good thing; and that therefore it is necessary to his conversion and salvation that he be regenerated and renewed by the

operation of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God through Jesus Christ.”

4. "That this divine grace or energy of the Holy Ghost, which heals the disorders of a corrupt nature, begins, advances, and brings to perfection everything that can be called good in man; and that, consequently, all good works, without exception, are to be attributed to God alone, and to the operation of His grace; that, nevertheless, this grace does not force the man to act against his inclination, but may be resisted and rendered ineffectual by the perverse will of the impenitent sinner.

5. "That they who are united to Christ by faith are thereby furnished with abundant strength and succor sufficient to enable them to triumph over the seductions of Satan, and the allurements of sin; nevertheless they may, by the neglect of these succors, fall from grace and, dying in such a state, may finally perish. This point was started at first doubtfully, but afterward positively as a settled doctrine."

From the Calvinistic standpoint, the Five Points are stated as follows: (1) Unconditional Election; (2) Limited Atonement; 3) Natural Inability; (4) Irresistible Grace; and (S) Final Perseverance. Sometimes they are expressed in the following terms: (1) Predestination; (2) Limited Atonement; (3) Total Depravity; (4) Effectual Calling; and (5) Final Perseverance.⁷

In the history of the development of Arminian theology there have been five main contributors: Arminius, John Goodwin, John Wesley, Richard Watson and Orton Wiley. Most of the discussion of this chapter will center around these men.

B. The Development of Arminian Theology

Because of the importance of grasping the distinctions within Arminianism it will be necessary to quote some of the original at length. However, it is from the distinctions that many

of today's controversy derives. Arminianism in a pure form does not exist in any major denomination today.

When the Methodists began to grow rapidly after the American Revolution, they often came into sharp conflict with the "old school" Calvinism that dominated much of American Protestantism through the middle of the nineteenth century. To the Calvinist claim of "unconditional election" (some are predestined to be saved while others are predestined to be lost), the Methodists answered with the theory of "conditional election" (predestination is based on God's foreknowledge of what a person will do, not on God's decrees). Other Arminian teachings, derived from the Remonstrants' disputation in the 1618 Synod of Dort, were: "Universal atonement" (the view that Christ died for all and that the effectiveness of his death is limited only by man's individual faith.); "natural inability" (the conviction that man cannot do good apart from divine grace); "prevenient grace" (the view that God's grace "goes before" and accounts for conviction for sin and a desire to be saved and can be resisted); and "conditional perseverance" (the doctrine that though God's grace is sufficient, they may neglect their salvation, apostacize and fall from grace).⁸

This description of Arminian theology differs in many ways from the teachings of Arminius himself. The divergence began early. Even at the Synod of Dort in 1618, just nine years after Arminius died, his followers presented their own theories, not those of Arminius. In his own life Arminius was twice examined, and never condemned, for Calvinistic heresy. However, his followers were quickly spotted as being qualitatively less.

Note that this controversy does not represent either Calvin or Arminius individually. The development was taken further away from both the original sources by Beza and Episcopius, and

more by Wesley.

Wesley published a pamphlet entitled, "Serious Considerations on Absolute Predestination" in which his views on this subject are stated as follows:

1. God delighteth not in the death of the sinner, but would that all should live and be saved, and hath given his Son, that all that believe on him should be saved. He is the true light which lighteth every man which cometh into the world. And this light would work out the salvation of all, if not resisted.
2. But some assert, that God by an eternal and unchangeable decree, hath predestinated to eternal damnation the far greater part of mankind, and that absolutely, without any regard to their works, but only for the showing the glory of his justice; and that for the bringing of this about, He hath appointed miserable souls necessarily to walk in their wicked ways, that so his justice may lay hold on them.
3. This doctrine is novel. In the first four hundred years after Christ, no mention is made of it by any writer, great or small, in any part of the Christian Church. The foundations of it were in the later writings of Augustine, when unguardedly writing against Pelagius.⁹

A contemporary writer has summarized the main points of the Synod of Dort response to the Arminian position from his own point of view. This is quoted to show the additional development from Arminius to the present.

With this in mind we will attempt a reinterpretation of the Synod of Dort.

(1) Man is totally depraved, i.e., he can do no good in himself and cannot choose Christ over sin. However, this does not mean he has no volition, for the Spirit convicts all men equally and enables them to come to faith-decision, i.e., to the point of yielding to the Spirit's convicting power.

(2) Believers are elect or predestined to a life of holiness and conformity to the Son.

This salvific choice is concomitant with foreknowledge and does not amount to an ineffable call to a chosen few but rather is the accompanying force with man's faith-decision.

(3) The atonement is universal, i.e., for all men, and is limited only by man's failure to respond.

(4) The call of God's grace is not irresistible and limited to the elect; rather the "drawing" power of God is universally applied but effective only for those who accept it by faith. God's grace and man's faith are separate aspects of the same salvific act.

(5) Perseverance is a necessity rather than a guaranteed, final promise. It relates to man's need rather than God's protection. Security is the other side of the need, for God does promise his protecting power, the believer must avail himself of that strength, lest he slip away and apostatize from the faith.¹⁰

C. The Decrees of Salvation

The salvation controversy begins in the understanding of the decrees of God. These decrees are the logical representation of the biblical teaching concerning the decisions God made governing salvation before the actual creation of the world. Arminius' own construction can be easily stated:

1. The FIRST absolute decree of God concerning the salvation of sinful man, is that by which he decreed to appoint his Son, Jesus Christ, for a Mediator, Redeemer, Savior, Priest and King, who might destroy sin by his death, might by his obedience obtain the salvation which had been lost, and might communicate it by his own virtue.

II. The SECOND precise and absolute decree of God, is that in which He decreed to

receive into favor those who had believed and, in Christ, for His sake and through whom, effect the salvation of such penitents and believers as persevered to the end; but to have in sin, and under wrath, all impenitent persons and unbelievers, and to damn them as aliens from Christ.

III. The THIRD divine decree is that by which God decreed to administer in a sufficient and efficacious manner the MEANS which were necessary for repentance and faith; and to have such administration instituted (1) according to the Divine Wisdom, by which God knows what is proper and becoming to his mercy and his severity, and (2) according to Divine Justice, by which He is prepared to adopt whatever his wisdom may prescribe and put it in execution,

IV. To those succeeds the FOURTH decree, by which God decreed to save and damn certain particular persons. This decree has its foundation in the foreknowledge of God, by which he knew from all eternity those individuals who would, through his preventing grace, believe, and, through his subsequent grace would persevere, according to the before described administration - those means which are suitable and proper for conversion and faith; and, by which foreknowledge. he likewise knew those who would not believe and persevere¹¹

Arminius developed at length his position on these decrees where he believed he differed from the Calvinism of his day.

1. The FIRST absolute decree of God concerning the salvation of sinful man, is that by which he decreed to appoint his Son, Jesus Christ, for a Mediator, Redeemer, Savior, Priest and King, who might destroy sin by his own death, might by his obedience obtain the salvation which had been lost, and might communicate it by his own virtue.

II. The SECOND precise and absolute decree of God, is that in which he decreed to receive into favor those who repent and believe, and, in Christ, for HIS sake and through HIM, to effect the salvation of such penitents and believers as persevered to the end; but to leave in sin, and under wrath, all impenitent persons and unbelievers, and to damn them as aliens from Christ.

III. The THIRD divine decree is that by which God decreed to administer in a sufficient and efficacious manner the MEANS which were necessary for repentance and faith:

IV. To these succeeds the FOURTH decree, by which God decreed to save and damn certain particular persons. This decree has its foundation in the foreknowledge of God, by which he knew from all eternity those individuals who would, through his preventing grace, believe, and, through his subsequent grace would persevere, according to the before described administration of those means which are suitable and proper for conversion and faith; and, by which foreknowledge, he likewise knew those who would not believe and persevere.¹²

And the decree of election, by which God resolves to justify and save this or that particular person, is subsequent to that decree according to which he determines to administer the means necessary and efficacious to faith, that is, the decree concerning the gift of faith.¹³

I grant that there is a certain eternal decree of God, according to which he administers the means necessary to faith and salvation, and this he does in such a manner as he knows to be suited to righteousness, that is, to his mercy and his severity. But about this decree, I think nothing more is necessary to be known, than that faith is the mere gift of the

gracious mercy of God; and that unbelief is partly to be attributed to the fault and wickedness of men, and partly to the just vengeance of God, which deserts, blinds and hardens sinners.¹⁴

It is important to note the continuity in the development of Arminius theology. The preceding list of decrees was written in 1608 in a formal response to questions that were being publically debated. The following list was written in the year of his death 1609. It was written in a milder explanation to some of his students.

1. The first decree concerning the salvation of sinful men, is that by which God resolves to appoint his Son Jesus Christ as a savior, mediator, redeemer, high priest, and one who may expiate sins, by the merit of his own obedience may recover lost salvation, and dispense it by his efficacy.
2. The second decree is that by which God resolves to receive into (gratiam) favor those who repent and believe, and to save in Christ, on account of Christ, and through Christ, those who persevere, but to leave under sin and wrath those who are impenitent and unbelievers, and to condemn them as aliens from Christ.
3. The third decree is that by which God resolves to administer such means for repentance and faith as are necessary, sufficient, and efficacious. And this administration is directed according to the wisdom of God, by which he knows what is suitable or becoming to mercy and severity; it is also according to his righteousness, by which he is prepared to follow and execute (the directions) of his wisdom.
4. From these follows a fourth decree concerning the salvation of these particular persons, and the damnation of those. This rests or depends on the prescience and foresight of God, by which he foreknew from all eternity (quinam) what men would,

through such administration, believe by the aid of preventing or preceding grace, and would persevere by the aid of subsequent or following grace, and who would not believe and persevere.¹⁵

In the third point Arminius adds the wisdom and righteousness of God as determining salvation. This has the effect of taking the decree of election out of a list and reminding us that, “because God loved, he chose. (Ephesians 2:4; I Peter 1:3). In the same way as Calvin, Arminius says that election is the foundation of salvation.

It is evident, at least, that there is some decree of God by which he determines to justify believers; and which, since it excludes unbelievers from righteousness and salvation, is appropriately called “the decree according to election” or “with election” as being that which does not include all men within its embrace. This decree I consider as the foundation of Christianity, of man’s salvation, and of his assurance of salvation and it is this of which the Apostle treats in the ninth, tenth and eleventh chapters of his Epistle to the Romans, and in the first chapter to the Ephesians.¹⁶

The discussion between Calvinist and Arminian views of salvation center in four points (not the TULIP sequence).

1. The atonement
2. The grace initiative of salvation
3. The Holy Spirit to give the experience of faith
4. The resistibility of saving grace

The remainder of this chapter will discuss these points.

D. The Atonement

The ground of the atonement is found in the sinfulness of man and the loving purpose of

God. God's judgment brings the penalty of death upon all people for all people have sinned.

Watson concludes,

That men, having become totally corrupt, are not capable of obedience in future. That if they were, there is nothing in the nature of that future obedience to be a consideration for the forgiveness of past offences, under a righteous government. It follows, therefore, that, by moral obedience, or attempted and professed moral obedience, there can be no remission of sins, that is, no deliverance from the penalty of offences actually committed.¹⁷

Thus there is no hope for man to save himself. He is already guilty and simply waiting the execution of God's penalty. The atonement of Jesus Christ is the only hope of salvation.

Wiley has an excellent discussion of the three main positions on the ground of the atonement.

1. The Reformed churches differed from the Lutheran in this, that while the Lutherans held that the satisfaction of Christ was sufficient for all sins, both original and actual, the Reformed limited the scope of the atonement to the elect. Both Lutherans and Reformed, however, made the death of Christ the center of the atoning work, flanked by the incarnation and the resurrection on either side. With the voluntary death of Christ as the procuring cause of salvation, they associated the merit of His active obedience to law. This they urged on the ground that He was a subject but the Lord of the law.
2. Over against the Lutheran and Reformed churches the Socinians revived the theory of Abelard, and in a measure that of Duns Scotus. These find their modern expression in the numerous moral influence theories .
3. The Arminians aimed at a middle ground between the extremes of the penal satisfaction theory and the moral influence theories. Grotius argued against Socinus, that

God punishes sin, not as an act of retaliation but as the Ruler of the universe in upholding of His government.¹⁸

The atonement includes the ideas of redemption, propitiation, and ransom. This is accomplished by the death of Christ. Another scriptural phrase used to refer to the death of Christ is the blood of Christ.

That deliverance of man from sin, misery, and all other penal evils of his transgression which constitutes our redemption by Christ is not, therefore, a gratuitous deliverance, granted without a consideration, as an act of mere prerogative; the ransom, the redemptive price, was exacted and paid; one thing was given for another, - the precious blood of Christ for captive and condemned men¹⁹.

This position is not different than the comments by John Murray on Romans 3:25.²⁰ If there is no substantial difference between the Calvinist and Arminian positions on redemption, there certainly is in regard to propitiation.

In the 1800's Watson wrote,

To propitiate is to appease, to atone, to turn away the wrath of an offended person. In the case before us the wrath turned away is the wrath of God; the person making the propitiation is Christ; the propitiating offering or sacrifice is his blood. All this is expressed, in most explicit terms, in the following passages: I John 2: 2, "And he is the propitiation for our sins." I John 4: 10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God; but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Romans 3:25, "Whom God hath set forth to be the propitiation through faith in his blood."²¹

This puts the emphasis on a universal intent in Christ's propitiation. Wiley, in the 1930s, wrote,

His sacrifice was the equivalent for all who had come under the penalty of death by reason

of sin. His death, therefore, has a universal significance, and this because of His divine nature. By virtue of this divine nature, the sinless humanity of the God-man reaches as far and as wide as the humanity to which it belongs. The death of Christ is not, therefore, to be limited merely to moral influence as an external and constraining power, but must be regarded as a propitiatory offering which avails for the remission of sins.²²

These writers agree on the universal intent but they fail to draw the logical conclusion.

In 1970 Lindsey agreed with the intent and drew a conclusion.

It's because when Jesus hung on the cross, He bore the compounded fury of God's just wrath against the sins of mankind. Now God has no more wrath to pour out on men. His justice is satisfied that all sin has been paid for. Propitiation removed God's wrath.²³

If God's wrath is removed, then nothing stands between God and man but sin, and the point of redemption shows that God has dealt with sin. The means by which both sin and wrath were overcome was the death of Christ. Watson had written,

The grand object of our redemption was to accomplish this salvation; and the first effect of Christ's atonement, whether anticipated before his coming, as "the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world," or when effected by his passion, was to place God and man in that new relation, from which salvation might be derived to the offender.²⁴

The only problem which remains is how each man is to participate in this purchased salvation.

The question of the extent of the atonement is debated in both Reformed and Arminian circles, it is the most flexible point of the controversy of the order and interpretation of the *ordo salutis*.

Calvinists usually trace the limited atonement position back to Augustine. Arminians are quick to point out that,

Apart from Augustine and his followers, it was the common belief that Christ died for all, and that it was the unfeigned will of God that all men should partake of. salvation through him. The fact that some are saved and some are not, was explained by reference to man's free agency and not by electing grace. Augustine, himself, distinctly advocated this position at first, but in his controversy with the Pelagians adopted a strictly monergistic system.²⁵

In the 20th century Pinnock takes a clear stand against the limited atonement position.

Exegetically, it stumbles over the great universal texts of Scripture. Theologically, it impugns the goodness of God and casts a dark shadow over the gospel. Morally, far from glorifying his justice, it calls it into question and raises very serious doubts about it. The theology underlying this volume, on the other hand, exults in the free offer of grace and bears joyous testimony to God's lovingkindness. Truly, "the grace God has appeared for the salvation of all men" (Titus 2:11).²⁶

What can be positively said to develop the unlimited atonement position? Lake comments on Romans 5:

Now what can be said about the universalism implied in the Romans 5 passage? The analogy and connection between Adam and Christ, Adam's sin and human fallenness as well as Christ's redemptive work and the triumph of grace provide a clue to their relationship. Augustine erred in his interpretation of Romans 5:12 because he took his theology from a poor Latin text of this passage rather than the Greek. In his Latin translation, he read in quo for the "eph o" meaning that we sinned in Adam, rather than that we sinned because of Adam. Here theologically a distinction needs to be made between original sin and original guilt. The text of Romans 5:12-14 clearly argues that

man's solidarity with Adam has led to man's receiving from him a sinful tendency toward evil, but the text does not support the conception that we are guilty for Adam's sin. Indeed the text goes so far as to argue that guilt is possible only where a known law exists. And without any violation of a known law, there cannot be any consciousness of guilt. "Sin is not counted where there is no law" (v. 13). C. K. Barrett states that this "putting to the count" is "a commercial term – put into the ledger." Consequently the effect of Adam's sin is universal but its personal significance depends upon the individual. Here we have an affirmation that the concept of corporate solidarity does not preclude nor exclude the concept of personal responsibility, The human race is one, and the effects both of Adam's sin as well as Christ's redemption or atonement affects the whole of humanity. The total impact of the Christian faith upon culture--all cultures but particularly Western culture--is a logical by-product of this solidarity. Yet, Adam's sin did not, in a technical sense, make mankind sinners. As Reinhold Niebuhr has aptly said: "Man sins inevitably but not necessarily:" In the same sense, the redemptive work of Christ is there as a universal given: man is forgiven, reconciled, redeemed and restored in the finished work of Christ. But its efficacy is not automatic. No more than man's sinfulness is an inherited fact as a by-product of Adam's disobedience.²⁷

Lake's comments on the universality of the second Adam's work is correct. But his second conclusion - that the personal significance depends on the individual is premature. Other factors could account for the limited effect of the application, while maintaining an unlimited effective atonement. Even though salvation is provided for all in Christ, some might miss it because of a lack of acceptance. Or, the application to the individual could be limited due to a failure of Christians to preach the gospel so that men might be saved. Or, the limitation of salvation may

be due to the choice of God, as in the supralapsarian position. Lindsey disagrees with this last alternative. “But the really incredible thing is that God has accomplished a, total provision of salvation for even those human beings whom He knew would reject it.”²⁸

Watson put the question clearly. “The question before us, put into its most simple form, is, whether our Lord Jesus Christ did so die for all men, as to make salvation attainable by all men; and the affirmative of this question is, we think, the doctrine of Scripture.”²⁹

This universalism has been a theme of Arminians in commenting on the Bible.

Again, our Lord calls himself “the Savior of the world,” and is, by St. Paul, called “the Saviour of all men.” John the Baptist points him out as “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,” and our Lord himself declares, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life: for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” So, also the Apostle Paul, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”³⁰

It is possible to find people who are otherwise Calvinistic who agree with this interpretation of biblical passages.

If we allow the passages to stand by themselves without bringing a theological perspective from outside the text, we may be able to harmonize John’s apparent intentions in a manner that does justice both to his universalism as well as his particularism. Leon Morris’ approach appears to do more justice to the text:

Because it is God who is working out His purpose in the events associated with Calvary, and because there is but one God, the salvation there wrought out is effective for all mankind. Thus Christ is spoken of not in terms of any restricted group, but of all

mankind. The Samaritan believers refer to Him as “indeed the Saviour of the world” (Jn. 4:42). John tells us explicitly that “God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him” (Jn. 3:17). Christ’s “flesh” is given (undoubtedly a reference to Calvary) “for the life of the world” (Jn. 6:51) .

Universality is implied moreover in the reference to the “other sheep” which are “not of this fold” (Jn. 10:15f). At the very least this extends the mission of Jesus beyond the Jewish nation, and once started on the Gentiles who is to say where it will end? .

.Nothing less is implied by Jesus statement, “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself” (Jn. 12:32). This is not the propagation of a doctrine of universalism, but it does mean that there are many who are to be drawn to Christ. We draw a similar conclusion from the reference to giving “eternal life” to as many as God has given Him in the same breath as the assurance that He has been given “authority over all flesh” (John 17:2). These words mean that Jesus will give life to men of all nations, and the preceding statement, “the hour is come” links this with the cross. And this is implied surely in the “whosoever” of passages like John 3:16, “whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life”. “Whosoever” is wide enough to include anyone at all, not only the members of one nation.³¹

The basic question which remains concerns the effectiveness of the atonement. Did Christ’s death actually save or did it only provide the possibility of salvation. Wiley gives a clear answer:

The atonement is universal. This does not mean that all mankind will be unconditionally saved, but that the sacrificial offering of Christ so far satisfied the claims of the divine law as to make salvation a possibility for all. Redemption is therefore universal or

general in the provisional sense, but special or conditional in its application to the individual.³²

A. A. Hodge, a Calvinist of the late 1800s, concurs:

It should be said, however, that the Calvinistic idea of a limited atonement does not grow out of a belief in its insufficiency; for Calvinists as well as Arminians believe in the sufficiency of the atonement. All Calvinists agree in maintaining earnestly Christ's obedience and sufferings were of infinite intrinsic value in the eyes of the law, and that there was no need for Him to obey or suffer an iota more nor a moment longer, in order to secure, if God so willed, the salvation of every man, woman and child that ever lived.³³

Many Calvinists would argue that Christ's death, to carry full meaning, must be actually saving in its effect. Others, like Hodge disagree by holding to both a potential universal reference in the atonement and to particular effects.

Thus the later Arminian position concerning the atonement is:

1. It was universal in intent.
2. It was universal in effect.
3. It included a substitutionary redemption.
4. It did not actually secure the salvation of any.

The results of the atonement do include certain specific actions which God took. These are categorized best by Wiley.

The Nature of the Free Gift. What, then, was the nature of this free gift, and what are the benefits from it which accrue to the race? We may broadly summarize these as follows:

- (1) The first benefit of the free gift was to preserve mankind from sinking below the possibility of redemption.
- (2) The second effect of the free gift was the reversal of the

condemnation and the bestowal of a title to eternal life. Judgment came upon all men to condemnation, so also, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. Thus the condemnation which rested upon the race. through Adams sin is removed by the one oblation of Christ. By this we understand that no child of Adam is condemned eternally, either for the original offense, or its consequences. Thus we may say, that none are predestinated unconditionally to eternal damnation, and that culpability does not attach to original sin. (3) The free gift was the restoration of the Holy Spirit to the race; not in the sense of the spirit of life in regeneration; or the spirit of holiness in entire sanctification, but as the spirit of awakening and conviction. We have seen that depravity is two-fold--the absence of original righteousness, and a bias or tendency toward sin as a consequence of this deprivation. Both of these have their origin in the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit as the original bond of union between the soul and God.³⁴

The Unconditional Benefits include, (1) The continued existence of the race. It is hardly conceivable that the race would have been allowed to multiply in its sin and depravity, had no provision been made for its salvation. Yet had it not been for the divine intervention, the immediate death of the first pair would doubtless have taken place, and with it the termination of their earthly career. (2) The restoration of all men to a state of salvability. The atonement provided for all men unconditionally, the free gift of grace. This included the restoration of the Holy Spirit to the race as the Spirit of enlightenment, striving and conviction. Thus man is not only given the capacity for a proper probation, but is granted the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit. Both of these subjects have been given extended treatment in our discussion of the problem of sin.³⁵

Thus the actual results of the atonement includes the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in a

new way, Wiley specified enlightenment and conviction as works of the Spirit, This matches John's description in 1:9 and 16:8. Watson had testified to this a century before:

The fruit of the death and intercession of Christ, is not only to render it consistent with a righteous government to forgive sin, but to call forth the active exercise of the love of God to man. His "good Spirit," the expressive appellation of the third person of the blessed trinity in the Old Testament, visits every heart, and connects his secret influences with outward means, to awaken the attention of man to spiritual and eternal things, and win his heart to God

Thus there is consistent testimony concerning the atonement among Arminians.

E. God or Man?

As we have seen Arminians have postponed the actual time of eternal determination to the point of application, This postponement is a major dividing factor between Calvinists and Arminians. The next logical question is, if the actual determination is postponed to the point of application, does this mean the person actually saves himself? Or is the initiative on God's part to lead the man to salvation? The former point would be decisive to make Arminianism a Pelagian (auto-soterism) position or at least a semi-Pelagian position (cooperation with God, the decisive action belonging to man). This question must include the doctrine of election. Arminius wrote:

They know that I use the word "Election" in two senses. (i.) For the decree by which God resolves to justify believers and to condemn unbelievers, and which is called by the Apostle, "the purpose of God according to election." (Rom. ix, 11.) And for the decree by which He resolves to elect these or those nations and men with the design of communicating to them the means of faith, but to pass by other nations and men.

In this case Arminius defined election (in the second sense) much as a Calvinist would.

However, he modifies the Calvinist position by adding an idea between the two senses of election. He says election is prior to faith as being that by which faith is appointed as the means of obtaining salvation. But if it signifies “the decree by which God determines to bestow salvation on some one,”³⁸ then faith foreseen is prior to election. For as believers alone are saved, so only believers are predestinated to salvation. But the scriptures know no election, by which God precisely and absolutely has determined to save anyone without having first considered him as a believer, for such an election would be at variance with the decree by which he determined to save none but believers.

Notice that in this understanding if God has determined to save only those who believe then He will actually save only those who believe. This implies that between the determination to save and the actual saving, faith must occur. This is the major theological point of Arminianism-- the actuality of salvation, the individualization, is postponed to the event of belief. If Arminius sees man as the initiating agent then it seems he holds to a Pelagian position. He says,

Concerning grace and free will, this is what I teach according to the Scriptures and orthodox consent: Free will is unable to begin or to perfect any true and spiritual good, without grace. That I may not be said, like Pelagius, to practice delusion with regard to the word “grace,” I mean by it that which is the grace of Christ and which belongs to regeneration. I affirm, therefore, that this grace is simply and absolutely necessary for the illumination of the mind, the due ordering of the affections, and the inclination of the will to that which is good. It is this grace which operates on the mind, the affections, and the will; which infuses good thoughts into the mind, inspires good desires into the affections, and bends the will to carry into execution good thoughts and good desires. This grace (praevenit) goes before, accompanies, and follows; it excites, assists, operates that we

will, and cooperates lest we will in vain. It averts temptations, sustains man against the flesh, the world and Satan, and in this great contest grants to man the enjoyment of the victory. It raises up again those who are conquered and have fallen, establishes and supplies them with new strength, and renders them more cautious. This grace commences salvation, promotes it, and perfects and consummates it.

I confess that the mind of (animalis) a natural and carnal man is obscure and dark, that his affections are corrupt and inordinate, that his will is stubborn and disobedient, and that the man himself is dead in sins. And I add to this that teacher obtains my highest approbation who ascribes as much as possible to divine grace, provided he so pleads the cause of grace, as not to inflict an injury on the justice of God, and not to take away the free will to that which is evil.⁴⁰

He defends the operation of the Holy Spirit enlightening, drawing and even inclining the will.

Man is not an active agent in his salvation. The only thing man can do is resist the grace of God which comes in this way. He can do nothing to assist it. This attributes salvation fully to God, but as “effectual resistible grace.” Man cannot save himself but he can cause himself to be lost. However, in the 20th century this position has been modified by many Arminians. Pinnock is one of many who say,

Election is the divine decision before the foundation of the world to reconcile mankind through Jesus Christ. It is objective and not conditional upon man’s decision, as if man really elects himself. Yet it is universal and therefore casts no shadow over the gospel. So long as we stress the importance of man endorsing divine decision for himself, Barth’s view of election is yet another option for the evangelical theologian.⁴⁰

Pinnock allows man some positive say in the saving process. Arminius left man’s activity only

on the side leading to loss.

In much the same way Wiley describes man as having a part to play whether he is saved or lost.

The elect in either the Arminian or Calvinistic view of grace are the called or chosen ones, but the two systems differ widely as to the manner of this election. Those who hold to the former view regard it as dependent upon the personal acceptance of a universal call, and therefore conditional.⁴¹

Later Wiley calls his position ‘synergistic’ which puts it in the realm of Pelagianism - the exact spot Arminius wanted to avoid. “Synergism, or the co-operation of divine grace and the human will, is another basic truth of the Arminian system.”⁴² Later Arminians, after Wesley, defend this position by appealing to a fourth result of the atonement (as an addition to the three listed by Arminius). “The Arminians taught that there was a “free gift” of righteousness, unconditionally bestowed upon all men through Christ.”⁴³

For the later Arminian, man is seen as saved. Christ’s atonement was both universal and effective. As Pinnock indicated even Barth’s universalistic position is partially true. All men are saved by Christ. But it is now up to each person to actualize his salvation by trusting Christ.

Opposing this position Arminius wrote concerning Pelagianism:

For I have contented myself with those sentiments which St. Augustine has expressed on this subject, whose words I have frequently quoted in the University, and have usually subjoined, that I had no addition to make to them.

Augustine says, “four questions may claim our attention on this topic. The first is, was there ever yet a man without sin, one who from the beginning of life to its termination never committed sin? The second, has there ever been, is there now, or can there possibly

be~ an individual who does not sin, that is, who has attained to such a state of perfection in this life as not to commit sin, but perfectly to fulfill the law of God? The third, is it possible for a man in this life to exist without sin? The fourth, if it be possible for a man to be without sin, why has such an individual never yet been found?" St. Augustine says, "that such a person as is described in the first question never yet lived, or will hereafter be brought into existence, with the exception of Jesus Christ. He does not think, that any man has attained to such perfection in this life as it portrayed in the second question. With regard to the third, he thinks it possible for a man to be without sin, by means of the grace of Christ and free-will, In answer to the fourth, man does not do what it is possible for him by the grace of Christ to perform, either because that which is good escapes his observation, or because in it he places no part of his delight." From this quotation it is apparent, that St. Augustine, one of the most strenuous adversaries of the Pelagian doctrine, retained this sentiment, that "it is possible for a man to live in this world without sin," Beside this, the same Christian Father says, "Let Pelagius confess, that it is possible for man to be without sin, in no other way than by the grace of Christ, and we will be at peace with each other."⁴⁴

The particular emphasis here is that any good is due to the grace of God. Man's effect or effort will only result in loss.

Watson, in the early 1800s, took the same position as Arminius.

When we speak of benefits received by the human race, in consequence of the atonement of Christ, the truth is, that man, having forfeited good of every kind, and even life itself, by his transgression, all that remains to him more than evil in the natural world, and in the dispensations of general and particular providence, as well as all spiritual blessings

put within his reach by the Gospel, are to be considered as the fruits of the death and intercession of Christ, and ought to be gratefully acknowledged as such. We enjoy nothing in our own right, and receive all from the hands of the Divine mercy.⁴⁵

It is allowed, and all Scriptural advocates of the universal redemption of mankind will join with the Calvinists in maintaining the doctrine that every disposition and inclination to good which originally existed in the nature of man is lost by the fall; that all men, in their simple nature state, are “dead in trespasses and sins,” and have neither the will nor the power to turn to God; and that no one is sufficient of himself to think or do any thing of a saving tendency. But, as all men are required to do those things which have a saving tendency, we contend that the grace to do them has been bestowed upon all. Equally sacred is the doctrine to be held, that no person can repent or truly believe except under the influence of the Spirit of God; and that we have no ground of boasting in ourselves, but that all the glory of our salvation commenced and consummated, is to be given to God alone, as the result of the freeness and riches of his grace,⁴⁶

Other theologians in the twentieth century who have taken an Arminian position on the atonement have taken a position similar to these early Arminians on the question of initiative. “Like Hosea, God knew we would never be brought back to Him unless (a) God took the initiative and (b) God took us “just as we are” in our condition of sin.⁴⁷

In addition to placing the initiative with God we need to question the source of the finalization of faith. Thus the questions of the initiation of faith and the finalization or actualization of faith may be studied separately.

The center of this actualization of faith concerns the relationship between the roles of God and man in the process. The object of faith is Jesus Christ. This object includes both the

person and work of the savior. It is the expression of this specific faith that once for all sets Christianity apart from any other religion. Watson traces the content of faith back to Abraham for definition.

His faith had Messiah for its great and ultimate object, and in its nature it was an entire affiance in the promise and faithfulness of God, with reference to the holy seed. So the object of that faith which is imputed to us for righteousness is Christ; Christ as having made atonement for our sins, (the remission of our sins, as expressly taught by St. Paul, being obtained by “faith in his blood;”) and it is in its nature an entire affiance in the promise of God to this effect, made to us through his atonement, and founded upon it.⁴⁸

This understanding of the object of faith is similar to the Reformed position. It is worth pointing this out because both groups agree on this.

A similar agreement is encountered if the relation of faith to works is studied. The teaching of the church of Rome on this point indicates that faith is a work and is not the only work necessary for salvation,

One of the historians of the Council of Trent, of great repute (Pallavicini), tells us that the assembled fathers were much exercised in attempting to explain the apostles statement, “We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Rom. iii.28). We cannot wonder at their perplexity when we remember the scholastic training which they had received, particularly as regards the theory of an infused justifying righteousness. In what sense were they to understand the faith which St. Paul apparently makes the instrument, or condition, of justification? How can they reconcile his words with the prevalent teaching of the Church? It is obvious that faith, in some sense, occupies a very prominent position in his reasoning on iustification; it cannot be

overlooked; it must be explained, or explained away, The difficulty was obvious, and was met as best it might, “With few exceptions,” Says Pallavicini, “they all agreed that when a man is said to be justified by faith, faith must be taken, not as the whole and the immediate cause of justification, but as the first preparation, and the first necessary root, to the actions whereby the gift is obtained; or if we may, in some sense, assign it the function of an immediate cause, yet it must not then be thought of as alone, but in conjunction with penitence and baptism.”⁴⁹

Thus faith, repentance and baptism were identified at Trent as work subsequent to which God saves men. An earlier form of this doctrine was what Luther was reacting against when he identified faith as God’s gift and the sole requirement for salvation.

There is historical continuity from the first century through the reformation and to the present day of a system of understanding faith which is contradictory to the Roman position. In the second century Chrysostom taught salvation by faith alone.

Chrysostom, upon Gal. iii, says, “For what was Abraham the worse for not being under the law? Nothing at all. For his faith was sufficient unto him for righteousness.” If Abraham’s faith was sufficient unto him for righteousness, it must needs be imputed by God for righteousness unto him; for it is this imputation from God that must make that sufficiency of it unto Abraham. That which will not pass in account with God for righteousness will never be sufficient for righteousness unto the creature.⁵⁰

This position is identical to Calvin’s:

Calvin has the same interpretation upon Rom. iv,3, “Wherefore Abraham, by believing, doth only embrace the grace tendered unto him, that it might not be in vain. If this be imputed unto him for righteousness, it follows, that he is no otherwise righteous, but as

trusting or relying upon the goodness of God, he hath boldness to hope for all things from him.” Again, upon verse 5, “Faith is imputed for righteousness, not because it carrieth any merit from us, but because it apprehends the goodness of God.” Hence it appears, that he never thought of a topical or metonymical sense in the word faith; but that he took it in the plain, ready, and grammatical signification.⁵¹

The same understanding of faith as the gift of God and not a work is found in Arminius as well.

This is my opinion concerning the Free-will of man: In his primitive condition as he came out of the hands of his Creator, man was endowed with such a portion of knowledge, holiness and power, as enabled him to understand, esteem, consider, will and to perform THE TRUE GOOD, according to the commandment delivered to him. Yet none of these acts could he do, except through the assistance of Divine Grace. But in himself, either to think, to will, or to do that which is really good; but it is necessary for him to be regenerated and renewed in his intellect, affections or will, and in all his powers, by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, that he may be qualified rightly to understand, esteem, consider, will; and perform whatever is truly good.⁵²

For Chrysostom, Calvin, Arminius, and Watson faith is God’s gift to men, it initiates from God and must precede any good work on man’s part.

Earlier it was pointed out that there is a lack of consistency apparent between Arminius and his later followers. But on this point of faith there is some general agreement. Richard Watson wrote,

Faith being thus understood, excludes all notion of its meritoriousness. It is not faith, generally considered, which is imputed to us for righteousness; but faith (trust) in an atonement offered by another in our behalf; by which trust in something without us, we

acknowledge our own insufficiency, guilt, and unworthiness, and directly ascribe the merit to that in which we trust, and which is not our own, namely, the propitiation of the blood of Christ.⁵³

In the twentieth century this same position is taught by Donald Lake:

Faith was never understood as a meritorious work - something qualifying man for salvation, but simply the morally neutral means by which the grace of Christ was received. The acceptance of the pardon certainly does not imply some meritorious work on the part of the believer, making him deserving of salvation.⁵⁴

Lake places himself in the category of theologians which traces back through history. A similar statement is given by Clark Pinnock as he describes Arminian theology.

The standard criticism leveled against a theology of this kind is synergism. It is supposed to bring into the event of salvation a decisive human work, and thereby destroy its purely gracious character. But this is simply not the case. Faith is not a work at all (Rom. 4:16). It is not an achievement and has no merit attaching to it. It is simply the surrender of the will to God, the stretching out of an empty hand to receive the gift of grace. In the act of faith, we renounce all our works, and repudiate completely every claim to self—righteousness. Far from encouraging conceit and self—esteem, faith utterly excludes them (Rom. 3:27). Even when we speak of faith as a “condition,” let us not misrepresent the meaning of this expression. Faith is not the condition of grace, which originates in the counsels of eternity. Faith is rather the response to grace God calls for through which salvation becomes a reality to the individual concerned. We are saved by God’s grace through faith.⁵⁵

The link exists through all historical periods, It is not a Protestant position alone, it is the

orthodox position. Protestants of all sorts need to see themselves as maintaining the historic understanding of the church, rather than as breaking away. Faith has always been understood as non-meritorious, except in the Roman Catholic position.

Faith is not identified as meritoriously neutral. It is specifically taught by Arminians as a gift of God. Arminius said,

Perhaps, therefore, the question may be thus corrected: “Can God, now, in his own right, demand from fallen man faith in Christ, which he cannot have of himself, though God neither bestows on him, nor is ready to bestow, sufficient grace by which he may believe?” This question will be answered by a direct negative. God cannot by any right demand from fallen man faith in Christ, which he cannot have of himself, except God has either bestowed, or is ready to bestow, sufficient grace by which he may believe if he will.⁵⁶

Arminius went beyond this statement of faith being a gift. The actions which, from a human viewpoint, are the causes of faith (i.e., the preaching of the gospel in the presence of one who believes) are also said to be the gift of God.

Since therefore faith is said “to be foreseen by God in those who are to be saved,” those causes, without the intervention of which there could be no faith, are not removed, but are rather appointed. Among those causes, I consider the preventing, accompanying and succeeding (subsequent) grace of God, as the principal, And I say, with Fulgentius, “Those persons will be saved, or they have been predestinated and elected, who, God foreknew, would believe by the assistance of his preventing grace, (I add and of his accompanying grace) and would persevere by the aid of his subsequent grace.”⁵⁷

For Arminius each step in the actualization of faith comes from the free goodness of God. An

interesting minor point is that Arminius and most later Arminians disagreed concerning the source of the gracious action of God in giving faith.

Arminius regarded the ability bestowed upon our depraved nature which enabled it to cooperate with God, as flowing from the justice of God, without which man could not be held accountable for his sins. Wesley on the other hand, regarded this ability as solely a matter of grace, an ability conferred through the free gift of prevenient grace, given to all men as a first benefit of the universal atonement made by Christ for all men. The differences between the Wesleyans and the Remonstrants are thus summed up by Dr. Charles Hodge: “Wesleyanism (1) admits entire moral depravity; (2) denies that any men in this state have any power to co-operate with the grace of God; (3) asserts that the guilt of all through Adam was removed by justification of all through Christ; and (4) ability to co-operate is of the Holy Spirit, through the universal influence of the redemption of Christ.”⁵⁸

Arminius founded the gift of faith in the justice of God. In order to condemn all men God will find them guilty of rejecting faith as well as of transgression of His law. Wesley and others grounded the gift of faith in the decree of atonement. In spite of the dicotomous way this is presented by Wiley, the two positions are not incompatible. The justice of God, as well as the love of God, may have led to the decree. Understood in this way the two positions are simply different aspects of a whole.

How God gives this faith to man is carefully described by Arminians. Orton Wiley gives the general definition: “Saving faith is that act by which the prevenient grace of the Spirit passes over into the regenerate life of the believer.”⁵⁹

In this general sense faith is an act ascribed to the Holy Spirit and to man. The nature of

faith itself is important.

It may be said without irreverence that the reason why, in God's method of salvation, faith is selected as the channel of God's grace is not because there is any special virtue in it, or because it is the greatest of all Christian graces, for charity is greater (I Cor. xiii. 2,13), but because faith is peculiarly fit for this particular office, since there is in it that element of self—surrender, of trust, confidence, and reliance on another, which necessarily excludes all reliance on self and our own merits.⁶⁰

This understanding of faith is important as a consequence of the rejection of faith as a work. It is a positive act of trust in Jesus Christ, under the leading of the Spirit.

Wiley gives a careful exposition of the process of coming to faith.

The first step toward salvation in the experience of the soul, begins with vocation or the gracious call of God which is both direct through the Spirit and immediate through the Word. This is followed by awakening and conviction. Conversion, in the narrower sense of the term, is sometimes used in this connection also.⁶¹

He elaborates on this idea of the means of the call and adds the element of providence.

There is a third theory which we believe expresses the true scriptural doctrine. This admits the indirect influence of the Spirit through the Word, but maintains that in addition to this, there is an immediate or direct influence upon the hearts of men, not only accompanying the Word, but also the providences and the various means of grace.⁶²

That such drawing of the Spirit takes place is understood, But the subjective element which is usually denied by Calvinists, is given special attention by Arminians.

Awakening is a term used in theology to denote that operation of the Holy Spirit by which men's minds are quickened to a consciousness of their lost estate. In this

quickenings, the Spirit not only works through the medium of objective truth but by a direct influence upon the minds and hearts of men.⁶³

Conviction is that operation of the Spirit which produces within men, a sense of guilt and condemnation because of sin.

Faith is the result of a process begun, continued and brought to completion by the Holy Spirit. The external Word is preached in the power of the Spirit and an accompanying work of the Spirit draws the man to Christ. The Arminian believes John 12:32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." This is a most important verse in the Arminian system. It relates both to the understanding of the atonement and to the common and prevenient work of the Holy Spirit.

While faith is seen to be the creative sustaining work of the Spirit:, it is also man's act. A basic statement is given by Hastings.

The offer is free, "we are saved by grace," But it is "through faith," and faith on man's side corresponds to grace God's side--it is the response of the soul to the appeal of love.⁶⁴ Faith, in scripture, is called for as the response of men to the gospel message. A few verses indicate that God enables the entire process to take place. But the faith is the person's act.

Dr. Adam Clarke gives perhaps the clearest and best statement of the Wesleyan position. He says, "Is not faith the gift of God? Yes, as to the grace by which it is produced; but the grace or power to believe, and the act of believing are two different things. Without the grace or power to believe no man ever did or can believe; but with that power the act of faith is a man's own."⁶⁵

This relationship of God's saving work and man's resulting act of faith could be taught as a fairly cold procedure. But when the love of God is understood as foundational and the result is not

merely justification but also regeneration, adoption and indwelling, the process becomes personal and vital.

Thus the idea of justification in the New Testament is lifted above mere external legalism in that it is “by faith.” Justification by faith is God’s plan of enabling sinful men to pass from the legal to the filial consciousness - a redemption ‘from the law in order to the adoption of sons. This is St. Paul’s way of deliverance from Jewish legalism. The faith principle changes the formal and legal side of justification into something vital and spiritual. The vital – life - union is thus combined with the formal declaration and the whole process is lifted from the lower plane of bondage, to the new and higher plane of spiritual sonship.⁶⁶

Personal faith is the element in the saving process which adds a clear note from a loving father to what could be external and mechanical. Christ could have died, God could have chosen, the Spirit could have regenerated apart from any response on man’s part. Instead, God chose to demand a personal commitment of faith and to give that ability to have faith to people as a free gift.

Finally, faith is the actual instrument of salvation. Watson makes this clear:

This is that qualifying condition to which the promise of God annexes justification; that without which justification would not take place; and in this sense it is that we are justified by faith; not by the merit of faith, but by faith instrumentally as this condition, for its connection with the benefit arises from the merits of Christ, and the promise of God.⁶⁷

He also points out that faith is the sole condition God has imposed and the only condition upon which God acts to bring salvation. “Surely the difficulty of assenting to the proposition, that faith

is the only condition of justification, must arise from not understanding it. We mean thereby this much, that it is the only thing, without which no one is justified.”⁶⁸ Pinnock adds that the unbeliever has the possibility of resisting this saving grace, but sacrifices the same understanding of faith as a condition. “God’s grace may be genuinely extended to people, but unless it meets the response of faith, the only response that pleases God, it has no saving effect .⁶⁹

Arminius had laid this foundation. But notice the last part of his description:

- (1) Faith is not an effect of election.
- (2) Faith is a necessary requisite in those who are to be elected or saved.
- (3) This requisite is foreseen by God in the persons to be elected.

I confess, all these , when rightly understood and correctly explained, agree entirely with my opinion, on the subject. But the last of the members is proposed in terms too odious, since it makes no mention of God, whose benefit and gift I acknowledge faith to be.⁷⁰

Therefore the Arminian system of theology maintains an emphasis on the act of man’s faith, but as fully the work (and therefore the merit) and gift of God.

One final question remains. If God initiates the saving process for all men, gives the faith as His work, and brings it to completion, how is it that some are not saved? Aspects of universalism are present in all Arminian theologians. But none, short of Karl Barth who suggests it, espouse a final universalism, i.e., that all will be ultimately saved.

Wiley describes the later Arminian position.

The Nature of Prevenient Grace. We come now to a consideration of the doctrine of prevenient grace as advanced by the earlier Arminians, and as given its distinct and final form by the Wesleyans. The original statement is found in the fourth article of the Five

Points of the Remonstrants, as follows: “That this divine grace or energy of the Holy Ghost, which heals the disorders of a corrupt nature, begins, advances, and brings to perfection everything that can be called good in man; and that, consequently, all good works, without exception, are to be attributed to God alone, and to the operation of His grace; that, nevertheless, this grace does not force the man to act against his-inclination, but may be resisted and rendered ineffectual by the perverse will of the impenitent sinner.” This article is analyzed and set forth in propositional form by Mr. Watson in his Institutes, as follows:

1. Everything which can be called in man, previous to regeneration is to be attributed to the work of the Spirit of God. Man himself is totally depraved and not capable of either thinking or doing any good thing, as shown by the previous article.
2. That the state of nature in which man exists previous to regeneration, is in some sense a state of grace--preliminary or prevenient trace.
3. That in this preliminary period there is a continuity of grace--the Holy Spirit, beginning, advancing and perfecting everything that can be called good in man. The Spirit of God leads the sinner from one step to another, in proportion as he finds response in the heart of the sinner and a disposition to obedience.
4. That there is a human co-operation with the divine Spirit, the Holy Spirit working with the free will of man, quickening, aiding and directing it in order to secure compliance with the conditions of the covenant by which man may be saved.
5. That the grace of God is given to all men in order to bring them to salvation through Jesus Christ, but that this grace so given, may be resisted by the free will of man, so as to be rendered ineffectual .

From this analysis it appears that the main points in the Arminian system of grace are the following: (1) the inability of man as totally depraved; (2) the state of nature as in some sense a state of grace through the unconditional benefit of the atonement; (3) the continuity of grace as excluding the Calvinistic distinction between common and efficacious grace; (4) synergism, or the co-operation of grace and free will; and (5) the power of man to finally resist the grace of God freely bestowed upon him.⁷¹

This passage was quoted in spite of its length because of its importance. Two issues are here: God's saving grace is resistible; Wiley freely uses the term synergism to describe the process. These items are true in all Arminians since Wesley, except Watson. But it was not true of Arminius himself. He said,

Concerning the expression, by this sufficient grace they may believe, if they will." These words, when delivered in such a crude and undigested form, are capable of being brought to bear a very bad interpretation, and a meaning not at all agreeable to the scriptures, as though, after that power had been bestowed, the Holy Spirit and Divine Grace remain entirely quiescent, waiting to see whether the man will properly use the power which he has received, and will believe the gospel. When, on the contrary, he who wishes to entertain and to utter sentiments on this subject, will account it necessary to ascribe to Grace its own province, which, indeed, is the principal one, in persuading the human will that it may be inclined to yield assent to those truths which are preached.⁷²

This is similar to the position of Watson in the early nineteenth century.

It is to this offer of salvation by the Gospel, this invitation to spiritual and eternal benefits, that St. Peter appears to refer, when he says, Acts ii,39, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God

shall CALL: “a passage which, we may observe, in passing, declares “the promise” to be as extensive as the “calling;” in other words, as the offer or invitation. To this also St. Peter refers, Rom. i,5,6, “By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name;” that is, to publish his Gospel, in order to bring all nations to the obedience of faith; “among whom are ye also the CALLED of Jesus Christ;” you at Rome have heard the Gospel, and have been invited to salvation in consequence of this design.⁷³

This is a strong rejection of the Reformed position. Watson uses the set of verses which has proven most difficult for the Reformed theologians.

Watson, more than any other, sets forth the biblical argument for this point of the Arminian system.

From these premises the conclusions which legitimately flow, are in direct opposition to the Calvinistic hypothesis. They establish,

1. The justice of God in the condemnation of men, which their doctrine leaves under a dark and impenetrable cloud. If, therefore, it appears that the destruction of men is attributed to their resistance of those influences of the Holy Spirit, which, but for that resistance, would have been saving, according to the design of God in imparting them, then is the justice of GOD manifested in their punishment; and it follows, also, that his grace so works in men, as to be both sufficient to lead them into a state of salvation, and even actually to place them in this state, and yet so as to be capable of being finally and fatally frustrated.

2. These premises, also, secure the glory of our salvation to the grace of God; but not by implying the Calvinistic notion of the continued and uninterrupted irresistibility of

the influence of grace and the passiveness of man, so as to deprive him of his agency; but by showing that his agency, even when rightly directed, is upheld and influenced by the superior power of GOD, and yet so as to be still his own.⁷⁴

The specific methods of the resisting of the Spirit by some are outlined by Arminius.

All unregenerate persons have freedom of will, and a capability of resisting the Holy Spirit, of rejecting the proffered grace of God, of despising the counsel of God against themselves, of refusing to accept the gospel of grace, and of not opening to Him who knocks at the door of the heart; and these things they can actually do, without any difference of the elect and of the reprobate. Whomsoever God calls, he calls them seriously, with a will desirous of their repentance and salvation.⁷⁵

Arminius deals with this point elsewhere under the heading of sufficient grace .

Sufficient grace must necessarily be laid down; yet this sufficient grace, through the fault of him to whom (contingit) it is granted, does not (always) obtain its effect. (Secus) Were the fact otherwise, the justice of God could not be defended in his condemning those who do not believe.

The efficacy of saving grace is not consistent with that omnipotent act of God, by which he so inwardly acts in the heart and mind of man, that he on whom that act is impressed cannot do otherwise than consent to God who calls him; or, which is the same thing, grace is not an irresistible force.⁷⁶

This is the historic case of Arminianism in behalf of a resistible grace. Contemporary writers are in accord. Pinnock lays a foundation in the church fathers: “Augustine’s view of irresistible grace was a new theology in the early Christian church. Before that time her teachers such as Irenaeus and Origen had emphasized the universality of grace and the possibility of declining it.”⁷⁷

He concludes:

The point is this: if God's grace is truly intended for all sinners, and if all sinners are not in the end saved, it must be (there is no other possibility) that the grace of God in the gospel is resistible, or to put it positively and more adequately, personal in character, so that the choice before mankind to choose between life and death is an eternally real one.

This is of course the assumption underlying every such exhortation in Scripture.⁷⁸

Vernon Grounds takes a similar position and draws a conclusion regarding evangelism. "It is this universal salvific grace, that, if preached in the Spirit's power, may bring in our time another evangelical awakening like that which had John Wesley as its herald."⁷⁹

F. Conclusion

Arminianism is a loose system which was begun as a movement within the Reformed Church by Arminius. After Dort the lines were drawn. Wesley and post-Watson Arminians developed the system according to their own logic rather than following James Arminius. In the 20th century a group of theologians has risen outside the traditional Arminian tradition who have developed their own conclusions. In many ways Arminius has been left behind by Wesleyans. This is more true than the parallel movement from Calvin in Reformed theology, although it is true that Reformed theology is not simply Calvinism.

The formal separation and continued division of Calvinists and Arminians stems from the Synod of Dort. In the discussions and decisions of Dort the positions became a matter of logical consistency for each side rather than defense of biblical statements. Each side claimed its verses, but the approach was based on a "logical" system rather than on biblical evidence. John Calvin and James Arminius are far closer to each other than could ever be guessed from the positions of Warfield and Wiley.

Footnotes

- ¹ James Arminius, The Writings of James Arminius, Vol. 1, trans. J. Nichols and W. R. Bagnall (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), p. 253.
- ² H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology, Vol. II (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1952), p. 107.
- ³ _____, Christian Theology, Vol. I, p. 79.
- ⁴ Richard Watson, Theological Institute, (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855), p. 247.
- ⁵ C. H. Pinnock, Grace Unlimited (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), p. 11.
- ⁶ Wiley, Vol. II, p. 351.
- ⁸ F. Wells and J. D. Woodbridge, The Evangelicals (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), p. 41.
- ⁹ Orton Wiley, Christian Theology, (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1952), Vol. I, p. 338.
- ¹⁰ Pinnock, pp. 184-185.
- ¹¹ Arminius, p. 247-248.
- ¹² _____, p. 247.
- ¹³ _____, p. 288.
- ¹⁴ _____, Vol. II, pp. 470-471.
- ¹⁵ _____, pp. 494-495.
- ¹⁶ _____, Vol. I, p. 286.
- ¹⁷ Watson, p. 284.
- ¹⁸ Wiley, Vol. II, p. 241.
- ¹⁹ Watson, p. 123.
- ²⁰ John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1959), p. 116.
- ²¹ Watson, p. 113.
- ²² Wiley, Vol. II, p. 227.

²³ Hal Lindsay, The Liberation of Planet Earth (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), p. 90.

²⁴ Watson, p. 208.

²⁵ Wiley, Vol. II, p. 234.

²⁶ Pinnock, p. 13.

²⁷ _____ pp. 34-35.

²⁸ Lindsay, p. 129.

²⁹ Watson, p. 285.

³⁰ _____, p. 286.

³¹ Pinnock, p. 38.

³² Wiley, Vol. II, p. 295.

³³ _____ Vol. III, p. 296.

³⁴ _____ Vol. II, pp. 134-135.

³⁵ _____ Vol. II, p. 297.

³⁶ Watson, p. 211.

³⁷ Arminius, p. 267.

³⁸ _____, p. 300.

³⁹ _____ Vol. II, p, 472-473.

⁴⁰ Pinnock, p. 14.

⁴¹ Wiley, Vol. II, p. 335.

⁴² _____, Vol., II, p. 355.

⁴³ _____, p. 131.

⁴⁴ _____, Vol., p. 131, Arminius, p. 256.

⁴⁵ Watson, p. 207.

⁴⁶ _____, p. 447.

⁴⁷ Lindsay, p, 124.

⁴⁸ Watson, p. 240-241.

⁴⁹ James Hastings, The Christian Doctrine of Faith (New York: Scribners, 1919), p. 367.

⁵⁰ Watson, p. 237.

⁵¹ _____, p. 238.

⁵² Arminius, p. 252.

⁵³ Watson, p. 240.

⁵⁴ Pinnock, p. 42-43.

⁵⁵ _____, p. 15.

⁵⁶ Arminius, p. 70.

⁵⁷ _____, p. 287-288.

⁵⁸ Wiley, Vol. II, p. 108.

⁵⁹ _____, Vol. II, p. 375.

⁶⁰ Hastings, p. 369,

⁶¹ Wiley, Vol. II, p. 340.

⁶² _____, Vol. II, p. 342.

⁶³ _____, Vol. II, p. 341.

⁶⁴ Hastings, p. 371.

⁶⁵ Wiley, Vol. XI, p, 369.

⁶⁶ _____, Vol. II, p. 281.

⁶⁷ Watson, p. 246.

⁶⁸ _____, p. 248.

⁶⁹ Pinnock, p. 15.

⁷⁰ Arminius, pp. 285-286,

⁷¹ Arminius, pp. 352-353.

⁷² _____, pp. 300-301.

⁷³ Watson, p. 353.

⁷⁴ _____, pp. 447-448.

⁷⁵ Arminius, p. 497.

⁷⁶ _____, p. 498.

⁷⁷ Pinnock, p. 14.

⁷⁸ _____, p. 16.

⁷⁹ _____, p. 29.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

A. The Heart of the Controversy

The preceding research has established certain issues as central to the Calvinist/Arminian controversy. First, the debate is between two evangelical Protestant groups within the orthodox faith. Second, the debate is both biblical and systematic in nature. Both sides generally hold that any systematic construction must be based on the revealed Word of God, not the logic of men. But, they add, such a system must also make clear the logic of God as revealed in the Bible, what Augustine called the analogy of faith. We may or may not have enough information to “create” a system from a human perspective. Third, there is no question of a works salvation position. Although some popular writers have allowed their doctrine of salvation to degenerate to a “works” basis, no theologian in the mainstream of either Reformed or Arminian theology has done so. Fourth, the issues which are in conflict are: the definition and place in the order of salvation of the decree of election; the intended extent of the atonement; the relationship of the atonement to the actual salvation of the elect; the nature and extent of the work of the Holy Spirit in common and saving grace; and the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Fifth, both agree that the concept of grace - the unmerited action of God in the behalf of sinners to save them - is central to the biblical doctrine of salvation. This conclusion will study the five central issues in conflict (point four above) between the Reformed and Arminian positions. We will proceed first with the biblical data, based on the general context developed in the second and third chapters, and then develop a systematic conclusion.

1. Election

None of the theologies studied, either biblical or systematic, did an exhaustive study of

the use of the word “election” in the New Testament.

The Greek word for election, in one of its four main forms, occurs 52 times in the New Testament. There are a total of 13 variations of the word that occur which relate to salvation. This includes references which are not clearly related to salvation but are in some dispute. These thirteen forms occur thirty-two times in thirty verses. The forms are listed in the following table.

Grammatical Variations of the word Election

	Sing	Plur	Masc	Fem	Mid	Indic	1st	2nd	3rd	Aor	Nom	Gen	Dat	Accu
eklektōi		x	x								x			
suneklekte	x			x							x			
exelexato	x				x	x			x	x				
exelexasthe		x			x	x		x		x				
exelexsmen	x				x	x	x			x				
eklektous		x	x											x
eklektōios		x	x										x	
eklogen	x			x										x
eklekton	x		x											x
eklektwn		x										x		
eklektos	x										x			
ekloge	x										x			
ekloges	x											x		

As one studies the meaning of the word election used in these texts there are three main points to be made. First, whenever the subject of election is mentioned, it is God. He elects. Second, when election occurs in the verb form it is always middle voice, aorist tense, indicative mood. This means that God chooses for Himself or in order to bring about His own purposes. Third, His choice is a complete action, as a simple fact.

In these verses the objects are individuals, groups, Israel, and the church, which are chosen. The purpose of God’s choice is not often given. However, in Acts 9:15 Paul is said to be

chosen to bear Jesus' name as a worldwide witness. In John 15:16 believers are said to be chosen in order that they may bear fruit. In Ephesians 1:4 it says God chose us in Christ in order that we should be holy and blameless. These verses indicate that God's choice is for a purpose to be fulfilled in our lives in service to Him.

There is only one verse which indicate the basis or foundation of God's choice of believers and that verse does not give specific information. I Peter 1:2 says that God's election is based on His foreknowledge. But exactly what God foreknows and how He foreknows it is not specified.

What we can conclude, then, is that election has specific purposes in the plan of God and a basis in His foreknowledge. In this sense, the biblical sense, election is a general word referring to a decree of God to save some peoples and groups for some specific purposes. This means that the purpose of election is neither arbitrary nor secret. It may cover a series of specific choices, as well as being a general summary. In some cases it is a plan of God to save people through the death of Christ, by faith, in order that they may serve Him in specific ways, some of which are known by us.

The place of election in the covenant of grace is not clear at all based on the biblical statement. There is no direct reference to election combined with information about the covenant of grace. Foreknowledge is the only specific prerequisite.

A final interesting fact concerns the use of the phrase "in Christ." In many of the references, and in parallel references regarding salvation in general, our election is said to be in Christ. This points us to an understanding that, as whatever blessing are ours belong to us by virtue of being united with Christ (Ephesians 1:3), so election is true for us because we are in Christ. Election is planned before the foundation of the world and it is to result in our fruitfulness

and holiness (Ephesians 1:4), and it becomes actualized in our experience when we are joined to Christ by faith, just as his death became actualized in our hearts at a point in history (cf. John 7:47). While in theology election is connected to regeneration and union with Christ, in its historical outworking in the experience of each believer its reality is seen in our fruitfulness, subsequent to our union with Christ.

2. The Atonement

Three questions will be considered in this section. First, what was God's intended extent of the atonement? Second, did the atonement actually secure the salvation of some or did it secure the possibility of salvation for all and certain benefit for those who believe? Third, what is the place of atonement in the order of the decrees of salvation?

The intended extent of the atonement is clear in the New Testament. Jesus (Matthew 18:14; John 3:17; 6:51; 12:32), John the Baptist (John 1:29), John the apostle (1 John 2:2; 4:14), Peter (2 Peter 2:1; 3:9), the author of Hebrews (Hebrews 2:9) and Paul in eleven verses in six of his letters (Romans 5:18; 11:32; 1 Corinthians 15:22; 2 Corinthians 5:14,19; Colossians 1:19; 1 Timothy 2:4,6; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 3:4) all point to a universal intent in Jesus' death. Other verses speak of particular aspects of the atonement which are for believers. But that does not invalidate the wider intended application. Therefore, as we read the verses quoted by Calvinists and those quoted by Arminians we are often seeing two parts of one biblical position. Christ's death for sinners is intended for all people and to effect specific items for believers.

The second question relates to the effect of the atonement. The Reformed position in the theologians we studied holds that salvation was actually secured for the elect by means of Jesus' death. The Arminian position is that Jesus' death provided a sufficient base for the salvation of all men, and secured benefits for: all mankind, believers, and the earth itself (the first and last are

often called common grace. These positions are not mutually exclusive. For now, the larger question of the overall intent of God must be answered by including the biblical elements of both positions. I Timothy 4:10 says that Jesus is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. This verse includes the two elements. Jesus' death secured some benefits for all people, and additional benefits for believers. I John 2:2 is similar to this. Any biblical answer to the question of the breadth of the atonement must include both aspects.

The third question concerns the order of the decrees. The atonement is placed immediately subsequent to election by infralapsarians, thus maintaining particularism throughout the system which began with the election of a specific limited number of people. The Arminian outline places atonement in the same position but believes that both election and the atonement were potentially universal. For Arminians, the decree of believers' election particularises some benefits of the atonement for those who do not resist the leading of the Spirit. If you come to God it is by grace and by the leading of the Spirit. A mediating view by sublapsarians reverses the order of the decrees so that a universal atonement proceeds a particular election.¹

The Bible does not indicate anywhere the actual order of the decrees in the mind of God. The logical order given by various theologians grows out of theological presuppositions arising from their biblical theology and understanding of specific verses. Thus the order is not determined by scripture. Any of the above three positions regarding the order of decrees can be, and has been, argued as biblical. More work needs to be done in developing the overall biblical theology before any further conclusion can be drawn.

3. Prevenient and Saving Grace

The problem in this area concerns the activity of the Holy Spirit in providing the benefits of Christ's death to mankind. These benefits include:

1. a delay in the execution of God's judgment (2 Peter 3:8-9)
2. the blessings of health, prosperity and love in the midst of a sinful world. (Ephesians 2:4-10)
3. a restraint of evil so corruption does not overcome the world (2 Thessalonians 2:7)
4. a conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment for all the world (John 16:8-11).
5. power to live life successfully (Romans 8:4).
6. the existence of the church in the world as a redeeming influence (Acts 2:33, 39-47).
7. an outreach of the gospel under the Spirit's power to call all people to Christ (John 1; 12)

The problem of good is far more significant than the problem of evil. If the physical world is all there is to life then the laws of physics and energy demand an eventual death of all life on earth, i.e. man is ultimately meaningless. In a world like this how does one explain goodness?)

All of these benefits are poured out by the grace of God for all men, except number 5. These benefits are individually applied by the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30; I Thessalonians 5:19).

In this way the initiative, the work and the result are fully ascribed to God by both theological systems. The work of the Spirit in salvation, in light of the points made here, would then be seen to include: 1) bringing the gospel within the hearing of the person to be saved; 2) causing/allowing the individual to understand the meaning of the gospel message; 3) causing/allowing the person to realize his personal need for a Savior; 4) providing faith (as the ability to respond in trust to Jesus Christ); 5) impelling the person to exercise faith in Christ; and 6) actually saving the person who does not resist this leading by the Spirit.

This process is parallel in many ways to the process of inspiration. God led men to write and superintended the process in such a way that the result was authoritative to the very letters that are used (Matthew 5:18). God was clearly in charge of the process and we ascribe the presence and authority of the Bible to the grace of God. But the writers had a definite part in the

process. There are both divine and human aspects. Some books written by the same authors were not included in the Bible (1 Corinthians 5:9).

B. A Systematic Conclusion

As we attempt to inter-relate the biblical information on the five issues under discussion with the theological systems at hand a note of caution is in order. At this conclusive, theological juncture in any systematic theology we are studying the thinking of the human authors of the theology, not the revealed word of God. Most systems were not created whole by any single person. There are minor differences between writers within every system.

A discussion of the order of the decrees provides a good format for presentation of the doctrines of salvation. Using the results of the preceding four chapters we can draw the following outline. The love of God is foundational to His actions toward us. Therefore the decrees must begin with creation of mankind as good and innocent, with the potential for universal existence in heaven. Then comes the permission of the fall as a decree freeing Satan to come to tempt Adam and Eve and allowing them freedom to give in to the temptation. Knowing that humanity would freely choose to disobey God and would thereby lose its position and be penalized by condemnation, and yet desiring to save fallen mankind, God decreed that His own Son should die for their salvation. Then, knowing that none would respond to the model of His love in Christ or to the great benefits of salvation, God choose to extend previenient (preceeding or common) grace to all. Knowing who would reject the work of the Spirit and be lost and knowing who would not resist the work of the Spirit and therefore would be saved, God planned salvation so that those who are saved will be removed from under the curse, they will die to the law of sin and death (Romans 7: 1-11) and given a new standing in fellowship with Him. In this way they will never again come under condemnation (Romans 8), because they are not under the

law. He planned to have the Spirit seal all the saved and remain with them until Jesus consummates the earthly history of mankind, and to take them to an eternal destiny with Him in heaven. In summary form the order of the covenant of grace could be listed this way:

1. creation
2. fall
3. atonement (both universal and particular aspects)
4. calling (universal)
5. election (particular, based on union with Christ through faith)
6. faith
7. perseverance
8. glorification

As we continue to reflect on these theological issues it is imperative that the following priorities are maintained. We are called to be people of the book - the Bible. Therefore all discussion must focus around and continually be corrected by the whole counsel of scripture. No book of theology or church creed should control believers' faith. They can serve as symbols of the scriptural teaching and as guides into approaches to biblical thinking. Second, we all are given the tasks of evangelism and edification.² These should be accelerated, never damaged, by our theological speculation. Third, the unity of the Spirit, the walk in love we are to manifest, will never be hurt but rather helped by proper pursuit of the truth.

May our differences cause us all to bow in humility before God and ask Him for continual light and grace as we seek to glorify Him in every work.

¹See the chart in Appendix .

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