

Charles Hodge, one of the great reformed theologians of Princeton Theological Seminary in the 1800's, wrote concerning God's Plan of Salvation in volume two of his three volume work on Systematic Theology. Noting from scripture (Ephesians 1:10; 3:9-11) and from reason (as God works on a definite plan in the external world as is seen in the order of the universe and all forms of life so God has a plan in the higher spheres of his operations which concerns the spiritual world and the destiny of men) that God has such a plan Hodge emphasizes the importance of the knowing the Plan and where that knowledge can be gained (the Scriptures). He went on to identify what he considered to be seven of the more important views regarding it that are to be found in the history of the Church. His writing on this subject is both interesting and informative. Agreeing with Hodge, and more importantly with Scripture, that there is such a plan, that God has revealed it to us in the Scriptures, and that it is of vital importance to know it I would like, in Hodges own words, to succinctly set forth four of those views.

Hodge writes:

#### The Lutheran Doctrine as to the Plan of Salvation.

It is not easy to give the Lutheran doctrine on this subject because it is stated in one way in the early symbolical books of that Church, and in a somewhat different way in the "Form of Concord," and in the writings of the standard Lutheran theologians...According to this scheme, God, (1.) From general benevolence or love to the fallen race of man, wills their salvation by a sincere purpose and intention...(2.) To give effect to this general purpose of benevolence and mercy towards men indiscriminately, God determined to send his Son to make a full satisfaction for their sins. (3.) To this follows (in the order of thought) the purpose to give to all men the means of salvation and the power to avail themselves of the offered mercy...(4.) Besides this, before any contemplated action of men...there is the foresight of their action....

The Lutheran doctrine, therefore, answers the question, Why one man is saved and another not? by saying, Because the one believes and the other does not. The question, Why God elects some and not others, and predestinates them to eternal life? is answered by saying, Because He foresees that some will believe unto the end, and others will not. If asked, Why one believes and another not? the answer is, Not that one cooperates with the grace of God offered to all, and others do not; but that some resist and reject the grace offered to all, and others do not...The difficulty arising from the Lutheran doctrine of the entire corruption of our fallen nature, and the entire inability of the sinner to do anything spiritually good, is met by saying, that the sinner has power to use the means of grace, he can hear the word and receive the sacraments, and as these means of grace are imbued with a divine supernatural power, they produce a saving effect upon all who do not voluntarily and persistently resist their influence. Baptism, in the case of infants, is attended by the regeneration of the soul; and therefore all who are baptized in infancy have a principle of grace implanted in them, which, if cherished, or if not voluntarily quenched, secures their salvation...

#### The Remonstrant Doctrine (Arminianism)

In the early part of the seventeenth century Arminius introduced a new system of doctrine

in the Reformed churches of Holland, which was formally condemned by the Synod of Dort...Against the decisions of that Synod the advocates of the new doctrine presented a Remonstrance, and hence they were at first called Remonstrants, but in after years their more common designation has been Arminians...The Arminians taught,-

1. That all men derive from Adam a corrupt nature by which they are inclined to sin. But they deny that this corruption is of the nature of sin. Men are responsible only for their own voluntary acts and the consequences of such acts...
2. They deny that man by his fall has lost his ability to good. Such ability, or liberty as they call it, is essential to our nature, and cannot be lost without the loss of humanity...
3. This ability, however, is not of itself sufficient to secure the return of the soul to God. Men need the preventing, exciting, and assisting grace of God in order to their conversion and holy living...
4. This divine grace is afforded to all men in sufficient measure to enable them to repent, believe, and keep all the commandments of God...
5. Those who of their own free will, and in the exercise of that ability which belongs to them since the fall, cooperate with this divine grace, are converted and saved...
6. Those who thus believe are predestinated to eternal life, not however as individuals, but as a class. The decree of election does not concern persons it is simply the purpose of God to save believers...

#### Wesleyan Arminianism.

The Arminian system received such modifications in the hands of Wesley and his associates and followers, that they give it the designation of Evangelical Arminianism, and claim for it originality and completeness. It differs from the system of the Remonstrants,-

1. In admitting that man since the fall is in a state of absolute or entire pollution and depravity. Original sin is not a mere physical deterioration of our nature, but entire moral depravity.
2. In denying that men in this state of nature have any power to cooperate with the grace of God. The advocates of this system regard this doctrine of natural ability, or the ability of the natural man to cooperate with the grace of God as Semi-Pelagian, and the doctrine that men have the power by nature perfectly to keep the commandments of God, as pure Pelagianism.
3. In asserting that the guilt brought upon all men by the sin of Adam is removed by the justification which has come upon all men by the righteousness of Christ.
4. That the ability of man even to cooperate with the Spirit of God, is due not anything belonging to his natural state as fallen but to the universal influence of the redemption of Christ. Every infant, therefore, comes into the world free from condemnation on the ground of the righteousness of Christ, and with a seed of divine grace or a principle of a new life implanted in his heart. "That by the offence of one," says Wesley, " judgment came upon all men (all born into the world) unto condemnation, is an undoubted truth, and affects every infant, as well as every adult person. But it is equally true, that by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men (all born into the world- infants and adults) unto justification." And Fletcher, says, "As Adam brought a general condemnation and a universal seed of death upon all infants, so Christ brings upon them a general justification and a universal seed of life." "Every human being," says Warren, "has a measure of grace (unless he has cast it away), and those who faithfully use this gracious gift, will be accepted of God in the day of judgment, whether Jew or Greek, Christian or Heathen. In virtue of the mediation of Jesus Christ, between God and our fallen race, all men since the promise

Gen.iii.15, are under an economy of grace, and the only difference between them as subjects of the moral government of God, is that while all have grace and light enough to attain salvation, some, over and above this, have more and others less." Wesley says, "No man living is without the preventing grace, and every degree of grace is a degree of life." And in another place, "I assert that there is a measure of free will supernaturally restored to every man, together with that supernatural light which enlightens every man that cometh into the world."

According to this view of the plan of God, he decreed or purposed, (1.) To permit the fall of man. (2.) To send his Son to make a full satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. (3.) On the ground of that satisfaction to remit the guilt of Adam's first transgression and of original sin, and to impart such a measure of grace and light to all and every man as to enable all to attain eternal life. (4.) Those who duly improve that grace, and persevere to the end, are ordained to be saved; God purposes from eternity to save those whom He foresees will thus persevere in faith and holy living.

#### The Augustinian Scheme. (Calvinism)

The Augustinian scheme includes the following points: (1.) That the glory of God, or the manifestation of his perfections, is the highest and ultimate end of all things. (2.) For that end God purposed the creation of the universe, and the whole plan of providence and redemption. (3.) That He placed man in a state of probation, making Adam, their first parent, their head and representative. (4.) That the fall of Adam brought all his posterity into a state of condemnation, sin, and misery, from which they are utterly unable to deliver themselves. (5.) From the mass of fallen men God elected a number innumerable to eternal life, and left the rest of mankind to the just recompense of their sins. (6.) That the ground of this election is not the foresight of anything in the one class to distinguish them favourably from the members of the other class, but the good pleasure of God. (7.) That for the salvation of those thus chosen to eternal life, God gave his own Son, to become man, and to obey and suffer for his people, thus making a full satisfaction for sin and bringing in everlasting righteousness, rendering the ultimate salvation of the elect absolutely certain. (8.) That while the Holy Spirit, in his common operations, is present with every man, so long as he lives, restraining evil and exciting good, his certainly efficacious and saving power is exercised only in behalf of the elect. (9.) That all those whom God has thus chosen to life, and for whom Christ specially gave Himself in the covenant of redemption, shall certainly (unless they die in infancy), be brought to the knowledge of the truth, to the exercise of faith, and to perseverance in holy living unto the end.

Such is the great scheme of doctrine known in history as the Pauline, Augustinian, or Calvinistic, taught as we believe, in the Scriptures..."

Charles Hodge further wrote in regard to the difference between the Lutheran, Arminian, and Wesleyan schemes and that of the Augustinian or Calvinistic scheme and the importance of that difference. Again, in his own words:

"It is plain that the main point of difference between the later Lutheran, the Arminian, and the Wesleyan schemes, and that of Augustinians is, that according to the latter, God, and according to the former, man, determines who are to be saved. Augustine taught that out of the fallen family of men, all of whom might have been justly left to perish in their apostasy, God, out of his mere good mercy, elected some to everlasting life, sent his son for their

redemption, and gives to them the Holy Spirit to secure their repentance, faith, and holy living unto the end... It is God, therefore, and not man, who determines who are to be saved. Although this may be said to be the turning point between these great systems, which have divided the Church in all ages, yet that point of necessity involves all the other matters of difference; namely, the nature of original sin; the motive of God in providing redemption; the nature and design of the work of Christ; and the nature of divine grace or the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, in a great measure, the whole system of theology, and of necessity the character of our religion, depend upon the view taken of this particular question. It is, therefore, a question of the highest practical importance, and not a matter of idle speculation."

One can see from these words that more is involved in this discussion than simply who ultimately determines salvation, man (Arminianism) or God (Calvinism). Which ever view one adopts has far reaching implications for other serious and important matters of the Faith (sin, the saving nature of the work of Christ, the nature of divine grace, the work of the Holy Spirit, ect...). Believing strongly in the Augustinian or Calvinistic scheme, that it most accurately reflects the teaching of Scripture on this most important matter, it is my hope that this overview of the Plan of Salvation as it has been variously understood by the church historically will be helpful to all of us in seeking to better understand our "so great salvation" in Christ, the Glory of God that is so wonderfully exhibited in it and how others have understood it.

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