

**THE DOCTRINES OF SALVATION (SIN AND GRACE)**  
**Part IV: The Reformation Church**

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**I. INTRODUCTION.**

In this section of our study we are focusing upon the nature of man and the nature of salvation. The focus today turns to the sixteenth through the eighteenth century with a focus on the reformers (Luther, Calvin, and their traditions) who followed Augustine and Gottschalk, perhaps Anselm as well as the Post-Reformation era that brought heterodox (Socinian) and Orthodox (Arminian, Wesleyan) interpretations of the traditional doctrines. It is imperative that the student understand that the doctrines of sin, grace, and salvation are integrally related. The concept of sin, for example, will be the philosophic, theological foundation for interpreting the structure of the other doctrines.

**II. THE DOCTRINES OF SALVATION AND THE REFORMATION CHURCH.**

Shedd wrote (*History*, 2, 152), “The Reformers constructed the doctrines of Sin and Regeneration after the same general manner with Augustine and Anselm; the principal Lutheran and Calvinistic symbols agree in their definitions of sin and grace”.

**A. The Doctrines of Salvation in Martin Luther.**

- 1. Luther and the Bondage of the Will.** Luther’s answer to Erasmus’ “Diatribes on Free Will” is a classic presentation of his concept that man, in a soteriological sense, has no free will, but is in bondage to sin. Luther follows ecclesiastical tradition in teaching Adam’s innocence, Fall, and sinfulness. Adam’s fall plunged men into guilt that made him liable to punishment. Of man’s utter inability to believe he wrote (*Bondage*, 278-79): “But let us hear Paul interpret himself. In the third chapter, by way of peroration, he says: ‘What then? are we better than they? In no wise; for we have proved both Jews and Gentiles to be all under sin’ (v. 9). Where is ‘free-will’ now? All Jews and Greeks, he says, are under sin! Are there

any ‘figures’ or ‘knots’ here? What can the whole world’s ‘explanation’ avail against this perfectly clear statement? By saying ‘all’ he excepts none. By describing them all as ‘under sin’, that is, slaves of sin, he leaves then no goodness. Where did he give this proof that all Jews and Gentiles are under sin? Precisely where I called attention to it, that is, where he says: ‘The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.’ He there proceeds to prove from experience that men were unthankful to God and enslaved to a host of vices and are, as it were, forced by the fruits of their own ungodliness to admit that they will and do nothing but evil. Then he judges the Jews separately, saying that the Jew in the letter is a transgressor of the law, and proving it in a similar way from the fruits of experience, thus: ‘Thou that preachest a man should not steal stealest thyself; thou that abhorrest idols dost commit sacrilege’ (Rom. 2:21-22); and he exempts none at all but those who are Jews in spirit. You cannot find a way out by saying: though they are under sin, yet the best part in them, that is, reason and will, makes endeavours towards good. For if the endeavour that remains to them is good, Paul’s statement that they are under sin is false. When he names ‘Jews and Gentiles’, he includes all that is in Jews and Gentiles—unless you are going to turn Paul upside down and make out that what he wrote means this: ‘the flesh of all Jews and Gentiles, that is, their grosser affections, are under sin.’ But wrath is revealed from heaven against them. and unless they are justified by the Spirit it will damn them, whole and entire; which would not be, were they not under sin, whole and entire”.

Again, Luther wrote (*Bondage*, 310-11):

“Next: when Christ says in John 6: ‘No man can come to me, except My Father which hath sent me draw him’ (v. 44), what does he leave to ‘free-will’? He says man needs to hear and learn of the Father Himself, and that all must be taught of God. Here, indeed, he declared, not only that the works and efforts of ‘free-will’ are unavailing, but that even the very word of the gospel (of which He is here speaking) is heard in vain, unless the Father Himself speaks within, and teaches, and draws. ‘No man, no man can come,’ he says, and what he is talking about is your ‘power whereby man can make some endeavour towards Christ’. In things that pertain to salvation, He asserts that power to be null.

“But the ungodly does not come, even when he hears the word, unless the Father draws and teaches him inwardly; which He does by shedding abroad His Spirit. When that happens, there follows a ‘drawing’ other than that which is outward; Christ is then displayed by the enlightening of the Spirit, and by it man is rapt to

Christ with the sweetest rapture, he being passive while God speaks, teaches and draws, rather than seeking or running himself.”

Luther’s conception of Original Sin is also delineated in the great Lutheran creeds such as *The Augsburg Confession* (Article II):

“Also they teach that, after Adam’s fall, all men begotten after the common course of nature are born with sin; that is, without the fear of God, without trust in him, and with fleshly appetite; and that this disease, or original fault, is truly sin, condemning and bringing eternal death now also upon all that are not born again by baptism and the Holy Spirit.

“They condemn the Pelagians, and others, who deny this original fault to be sin indeed; and who, so as to lessen the glory of the merits and benefits of Christ, argue that a man may, by the strength of his own reason, be justified before God”.

The negative sections of Article I (On Original Sin) in the Formula of Concord are equally helpful:

- “I. We therefore reject and condemn that dogma by which it is asserted that Original Sin is merely the liability and debt of another’s transgression, transmitted to us apart from any corruption of our nature.
- “II. Also, that depraved concupiscences are not sin, but certain concrete conditions and essential properties of the nature, or that those defects and that huge evil just set forth by us is not sin on whose account man, if not grafted into Christ, is a child of wrath.
- “III. We also reject the Pelagian heresy, in which it is asserted that the nature of man after the fall is incorrupt, and that, moreover, in spiritual things it has remained wholly good and pure in its natural powers.
- “IV. Also, that Original Sin is an external trivial, and almost insignificant birth-mark, or a certain stain dashed upon the man, under the which, nevertheless, nature hath retained her powers unimpaired in spiritual things.
- “V. Also, that Original Sin is only an external impediment of sound spiritual powers, and is not a despoliation and defect thereof, even as, when a magnet is smeared with garlic

juice, its natural power of drawing iron is not taken away, but is only impeded; or as a stain can be easily wiped off from the face, or paint from a wall.

“VI. Also, that man’s nature and essence are not utterly corrupt, but that there is something of good still remaining in man, even in spiritual things, to wit, goodness, capacity, aptitude, ability, industry, or the powers by which in spiritual things he has strength to undertake, effect, or co-effect somewhat of good.”

2. **Luther and Regeneration.** According to Luther, the loss of power in natural man is one of the inevitable effects of sin, so that sin might be defined to be an inability to holiness. Hence, Luther refuses to attribute to fallen man these gifts and energies of unfallen humanity which he felt were lost by a voluntary act of apostasy. The utmost to which man is competent, without renewing grace, are acts of natural morality. Luther wrote (*Bondage*, 295-96):

“Let us cite the example that Paul goes on to cite, that of Abraham. He said: ‘If Abraham were justified by works he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness’ (Rom. 4:2-3). Here, too, please take note of Paul’s distinction as he recounts Abraham’s twofold righteousness. The one is of work; that is, moral and civil. But Paul says that this did not justify Abraham in the sight of God, even though it made him righteous in the eyes of men. He has glory before men by reason of that righteousness, but is yet without the glory of God. None can say that it is the works of the law, or ceremonial works, that are here condemned, for Abraham lived many years before the law. Paul simply speaks of Abraham’s works, and those his best works; for it would be absurd to argue as to whether a man is justified by evil works. If, now, Abraham is righteous by none of his works, so that, unless he puts on another righteousness (that of faith), both he and all his works are left under the power of ungodliness, it is apparent that no man can make any advance towards righteousness by his works; and it is further apparent that no works, efforts or endeavours of ‘free-will’ are of any avail in God’s sight, but that they are all adjudged ungodly, unrighteous, and evil. For if a man himself is not righteous, neither are his works and endeavours righteous; and if they are not righteous, they merit damnation and wrath.

“The other righteousness is that of faith, and consists, not in any works, but in the gracious favour and reckoning of God. See how Paul stresses the word ‘reckoned’; now he insists on it, and repeats it, and enforces it. ‘To him that worketh,’ he says, ‘the reward is reckoned, not of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness,’ according to the purpose of God’s grace. Then he quotes David as saying the same about the reckoning grace. ‘Blessed is the man to whom the Lord has not imputed sin,’ etc. (vv. 4ff.). He repeats the word ‘reckon’ in this chapter about ten times.”

The Augsburg Confession states (Article IV): “Also they teach that men can not be justified [obtain forgiveness of sins and righteousness] before God by their own powers, merits, or works; but are justified freely [of grace] for Christ’s sake through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and their sins forgiven for Christ’s sake, who by his death hath satisfied for our sins. This faith doth God impute for righteousness before him.”

The Formula of Concord is quite helpful (Article II):

“We believe, teach, and confess, moreover, that the yet unregenerate will of man is not only averse from God, but has become even hostile to God, so that it only wishes and desires those things, and is delighted with them, which are evil and opposite to the divine will. For it is written (Gen. 8:21): ‘For the imagination and thought of man’s heart are prone to evil from his youth.’ Also (Rom. 8:7): ‘The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be.’

“Therefore, we believe that by how much it is impossible that a dead body should vivify itself and restore corporal life to itself, even so impossible is it that man, who by reason of sin is spiritually dead, should have any faculty of recalling himself to spiritual life; as it is written (Eph. 2:5): ‘Even when we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us together with Christ.’ (2 Cor. 3:5): ‘Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing good as of ourselves; but that we are sufficient is itself of God’.”

Again, the same formula, but in the “negative” section:

“II. We repudiate, also, that gross error of the Pelagians, who have not hesitated to assert that man by his own powers, without the grace of the Holy Spirit, has ability to convert himself to God, to believe the gospel, to obey the divine law from his heart, and in this way to merit of himself the remission for sins and eternal life.

- “III. Besides these errors, we reject also the false dogma of the Semi-Pelagians, who teach that man by his own powers can commence his conversion, but can not fully accomplish it without the grace of the Holy Spirit.
- “IV. Also the teaching that, although unregenerate man, in respect of free-will, is indeed, antecedently to his regeneration, too infirmed to make a beginning of his own conversion, and by his own powers to convert himself to God, and obey the preaching of the word, shall have made a beginning, and offered his grace in the word to man, that then man, by his own proper and natural powers, can, as it were, give some assistance and co-operation, though it be but slight, infirm, and languid, towards his conversion, and can apply and prepare himself unto grace, apprehend it, embrace it, and believe the gospel.”

### 3. **Luther and Justification.**

- a. Martin Luther initiated the Reformation with his challenge to the sale of indulgences. Initially, he did not understand forensic justification, that a person could be declared righteous by God in a moment of time. Luther continued to hold the Augustinian view, that a person was “made righteous” over a period of time, a life-long process.
- b. About ten years after the Reformation began, Philip Melancthon, the systematizer of Lutheran theology, convinced Luther that a person could be justified in an instant and still remain a sinner: *simil iustus et peccator*. This meant that a person remained a sinner, though his legal standing before God was righteous.

### 4. **Conclusion.**

Luther’s views on the will and regeneration cannot be separated from his Augustinian view of justification which dominated the time period of his interchange with Erasmus. Though Luther eventually understood a forensic justification, he still maintained an Augustinian view of sin and grace and the bondage of the will so that he held to an Augustinian view of perseverance based on a flawed interpretation of Matt. 24:13.

## **B. The Doctrines of Salvation in John Calvin.**

1. **Calvin and the Bondage of the Will.** Luther and Calvin conceived the will of natural man to be enslaved and totally alienated from the thought of justice. Calvin stated (*Institutes*. 2, 2, 26): “26. We must now examine the will, on which the question of freedom principally turns, the power of

choice belonging to it rather than the intellect, as we have already seen (*supra*, sect. 4). And, at the outset, to guard against its being thought that the doctrine taught by philosophers, and generally received—viz. that all things by natural instinct have a desire of good—is any proof of the rectitude of the human will—let us observe, that the power of free will is not to be considered in any of those desires which proceed more from instinct than mental deliberation. Even the Schoolmen admit (*Thomas*, Part I, *Quest.* 83, article 3) that there is no act of free will, unless when reason looks at opposites. By this they mean, that the things desired must be such as may be made by the object of choice, and that to pave the way for choice, deliberation must proceed. And, undoubtedly, if you attend to what this natural desire of good in man is, you will find that it is common to him with the brutes. They, too, desire what is good; and when any semblance of good capable of moving the sense appears, they follow after it. Here, however, man does not, in accordance with the excellence of his immortal nature, rationally choose, and studiously pursue, what is truly for his good. He does not admit reason, without counsel, nor exert his intellect; but without reason, without counsel, follows the bent of his nature like the lower animals. The question of freedom, therefore, has nothing to do with the fact of man's being led by natural instinct to desire good. The question is, Does man, after determining by right reason what is good, choose what he thus knows, and pursue what he thus chooses? Lest any doubt should be entertained as to this, we must attend to the double misnomer. For this appetite is not properly a movement of the will, but natural inclination; and this good is not one of virtue or righteousness, but a condition—viz. that the individual may feel comfortable. In fine, how much soever man may desire to obtain what is good, he does not follow it. There is no man would not be pleased with eternal blessedness; and yet, without the impulse of the spirit, no man aspires to it. Since, then, the natural desire of happiness in man no more proves the freedom of the will, than the tendency in metals and stones to attain the perfection of their nature, let us consider, in other respects, whether the will is so utterly vitiated and corrupted in every part as to produce nothing but evil, or whether it retains some portion uninjured, and productive of good desires.”

2. **Calvin and Regeneration.** Calvin's doctrine of regeneration is simply that it is the “sole” work of God upon the basis of “mere grace.” According to Calvin, the will is not restored; it is totally reconstituted. Salvation is a work of God, not man. He wrote (*Institutes*. 2, 3, 7-8):

“But perhaps there will be some who, while they admit that the will is in its own nature averse to righteousness, and is converted solely the power of God, will yet hold that, when once it is prepared, it performs a part in acting. This they found upon the

words of Augustine, that grace precedes every good work; the will accompanying, not leading; a handmaid, and not a guide (August. ad Boniface. Ep. 106). The words thus not improperly used by this holy writer, Lombard preposterously wrests to the above effect (Lombard, Lib. ii. Dist. 25). But I maintain that, as well in the words of the Psalmist which I have quoted, as in other passages of Scripture, two things are clearly taught—viz. that the Lord both corrects, or rather destroys, our depraved will, and also substitutes a good will from himself. Inasmuch as it is prevented by grace, I have no objection to your calling it a handmaid; but inasmuch as when formed again, it is the work of the Lord, it is erroneous to say, that it accompanies preventing grace as a voluntary attendance. Therefore, Chrysostom is inaccurate in saying, that grace cannot do anything without will, nor will anything without grace (*Serm. de Invent. Sanct. Crucis*): as if grace did not, in terms of the passage lately quoted from Paul, produce the very will itself. The intention of Augustine, in calling the human will the handmaid of grace, was not to assign it a kind of second place to grace in the performance of good works. His object merely was to refute the pestilential dogma of Pelagius, who made human merit the first cause of salvation. As was sufficient for his purpose at the time, he contends that grace is prior to all merit, while, in the mean time, he says nothing of the other question as to the perpetual effect of grace, which, however, he handles admirably in other places. For in saying, as he often does, that the Lord prevents the unwilling in order to make him willing, and follows after the willing that he may not will in vain, he makes Him the sole author of good works. Indeed, his sentiments on this subject are too clear to need any lengthened illustration. ‘Men,’ says he, ‘labour to find in our will something that is our own, and not God’s; how they can find it, I wot not’ (August. de Remiss. Peccat., Lib. ii. c. 18). In his First book against Pelagius and Celestius, expounding the saying of Christ, ‘Every man therefore that heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me’ (John 6:45), he says, ‘The will is aided not only so as to know what is to be done, but also to do what it knows.’ And thus, when God teaches not by the letter of the Law, but by the grace of the Spirit, he so teaches, that every one who has learned, not only knowing, sees, but also willing, desires, and acting, performs.

Since we are now occupied with the chief point on which the controversy turns, let us give the reader the sum of the matter in a few, and those most unambiguous, passages of Scripture; thereafter, lest any one should charge us with distorting Scripture, let us show that the truth, which we maintain to be derived from



Scripture, is not unsupported by the testimony of this holy man (I mean Augustine). I deem it unnecessary to bring forward every separate passage of Scripture in confirmation of my doctrine. A selection of the most choice passages will pave the way for the understanding of all those which lie scattered up and down in the sacred volume. On the other hand, I thought it not out of place to show my accordance with a man whose authority is justly of so much weight in the Christian world. It is certainly easy to prove that the commencement of good is only with God, and that none but the elect have a will inclined to good. But the cause of election must be sought out of man; and hence it follows that a right will is derived not from man himself, but from the same good pleasure by which we were chosen before the creation of the world. Another argument much akin to this may be added. The beginning of right will and action being of faith, we must see whence faith itself is. But since Scripture proclaims throughout that it is the free gift of God, it follows, that when men, who are with their whole soul naturally prone to evil, begin to have a good will, it is owing to mere grace. Therefore, when the Lord, in the conversion of his people, sets down these two things as requisite to be done—viz. to take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh—he openly declares that, in order to our conversion to righteousness, what is ours must be taken away, and that what is substituted in its place is of himself. Nor does he declare this in one passage only. For he says in Jeremiah, ‘I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever;’ and a little after he says, ‘I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me’ (Jer. 32:39, 40). Again, in Ezekiel, ‘I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh’ (Ezek. 11:19). He could not more clearly claim to himself, and deny to us, everything good and right in our will, than by declaring, that in our conversion there is the creation of a new spirit and a new heart. It always follows both that nothing good can proceed from our will until it be formed again, and that after it is formed again, in so far as it is good, it is of God, and not of us.”

#### 4. Calvin and justification.

- a. Calvin first published his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536 with only six chapters. He held to a forensic view of justification by faith alone based on Romans 4. Once justified, no sin or series of sins could jeopardize this legal status. He understood He did not appear to have an Augustinian view of perseverance of the saints.

- b. Initially, Calvin understood a clear break between justification and progressive sanctification. Justification was instantaneous. Sanctification was progressive. Justification did not necessitate progressive sanctification.
- c. Pressure from the Roman Catholic reaction as articulated at the Council of Trent in charging the Reformers with promoting licentiousness led Calvin to re-examine his views. By 1559, in his 80 chapter *Institutes* he stated, “You cannot possess Christ without being made partaker in his sanctification ... in our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness.” (*Institutes*, III.16.1; 11.1). Once again, due to the influence of Augustine, justification was joined to progressive sanctification and perseverance was the guarantee of salvation.

#### 4. Calvin and Calvinism.

- a) **The Scottish Confession of Faith, 1560 states** (Article 12): “Our faith and its assurance do not proceed from flesh and blood, that is to say, from natural powers within us, but are the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; whom we confess to be God, equal with the Father and with His Son, who sanctifies us, and brings us into all truth by His own working, without whom we should remain forever enemies to God and ignorant of His Son, Christ Jesus. For by nature we are so dead, blind, and perverse, that neither can we feel when we are pricked, see the light when it shines, nor assent to the will of God when it is revealed, unless the Spirit of the Lord Jesus quicken that which is dead, remove the darkness from our minds, and bow our stubborn hearts to the obedience of His blessed will. And so, as we confess that God the Father created us when we were not, as His Son our Lord Jesus redeemed us when we were enemies to Him, so also do we confess that the Holy Ghost does sanctify and regenerate us, without respect to any merit proceeding from us, be it before or be it after our regeneration. To put this even more plainly; as we willingly disclaim any honour and glory for our own creation and sanctification; for by ourselves we are not capable of thinking one good thought, but He who has begun the work in us alone continues us in it, to the praise and glory of His undeserved grace.”
- b) **The Second Helvetic Confession, 1566** (Article 9): “Finally, we must see whether the regenerate have free wills, and to what extent. In regeneration the understanding is illumined by the Holy Spirit in order that it may understand both the mysteries and the will of God. And the will itself is not only changed by the Spirit,

but it is also equipped with faculties so that it wills and is able to do the good of its own accord. (Rom. 8:1 ff.) Unless we grant this, we will deny Christian liberty and introduce a legal bondage. But the prophet has God saying: 'I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts' (Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:26f.). The Lord also says in the Gospel: 'If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed' (John 8:36)."

- c) **The Belgic Confession of Faith, 1561** (Article 23): "We believe that our salvation consists in the remission of our sins for Jesus Christ's sake, and that therein our righteousness before God is implied; as David and Paul teach us, declaring this to be the happiness of man, that God imputes righteousness to him without works. And the same Apostle saith, that we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. And therefore we always hold fast this foundation, ascribing all the glory to God, humbling ourselves before him, and acknowledging ourselves to be such as we really are, without presuming to trust in any thing in ourselves, or in any merit of ours, relying and resting upon the obedience of Christ crucified alone, which becomes ours when we believe in him. This is sufficient to cover all our iniquities, and to give us confidence in approaching to God; freeing the conscience of fear, terror, and dread, without following the example of our first father, Adam, who, trembling, attempted to cover himself with fig leaves. And, verily, if we should appear before God, relying on ourselves or on any other creature, though ever so little, we should, alas! be consumed. And therefore every one must pray with David: O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."
- d) **The Canons of the Synod of Dort, 1619** (Article 9): "But when God accomplishes his good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, he not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds by his Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God, but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit he pervades the inmost recesses of the man; he opens the closed and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised; infuses new qualities into the will, which, though heretofore dead, he quickens; from being evil, disobedient and refractory, he renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that, like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions."

e) **The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647 (Article 4):**

“When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by his grace alone enables him freely to will and to that which is spiritually good; yet so as that, by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly, nor only, will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil.

“The will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to good alone, in the state of glory only”.

f) **The Westminster Shorter Catechism, 1647 (Questions 30-31):**

“Question 30. How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?

Answer. The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.

“Question 31. What is effectual calling?

Answer. Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.”

**PARENTHESIS:** The Views of Melancton and Zwingli.

- (1) **Melancton’s Synergism.** Melancton, Luther’s successor and formulator of the Augsburg Confession, receded from his earliest opinion on the helplessness of the human will. Instead of maintaining the monergism of Luther and Calvin he asserted that the human will retains a faint and ineffectual, yet real and unalienable ability; all that is needed is a strong impetus (grace). Shedd wrote (*History*. 2, 174): “This form of synergism, though the nearest to monergism of any, because it reduced down the human factor to a minimum is, yet, not the monergism of Luther and Calvin” (i.e., “a remote tendency to Pelagianism”).
- (2) **Zwingli and Original Sin.** Zwingli was the only reformer to advocate a non-Augustinian view of Original Sin. Zwingli did not accept Adamic unity so that sin, which he

conceives as universal, is only personal. Zwingli wrote (quoted from Shedd, *History*, 2, 175-76): “I think this in regard to original sin. That is properly sin which is transgression of the law; for where no law is there is no transgression; and where there is no transgression there is no sin properly so called—that is to say, so far as by sin is meant wickedness, crime, villainy, or guilt. I acknowledge, therefore, that our first father sinned a sin that is truly sin—that is, wickedness, crime, and turpitude. But those who are generated from that person did not sin in this manner—for what one of us but with his teeth ate the forbidden apple in Paradise? Hence, whether we will or not, we are compelled to admit that original sin, as it is in the posterity of Adam is not truly sin, in the sense already spoken of; for it is not a crime committed against law. Consequently, it is properly speaking a disease and condition. A disease, because as Adam fell from love of himself, so also so we fall. A condition, because as he became a slave, and obnoxious to death, so also we are born slaves and children of wrath, and obnoxious to death . . . Adam died, on account of sin, and being thus dead, that is sentenced to death, in this condition (status) he generated us. Therefore we also die—so far as he is concerned, by his fault and culpability; but so far as we are concerned, by our condition and disease, or if, you prefer, ‘sin,’—but sin improperly so called.”

### III. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION IN THE POST-REFORMATION ERA.

#### A. The Doctrines of Salvation in Socinianism.

Mention has been made in several lessons (#8, 16) of the history of the Socinian Movement under Laelius and Faustus Socinius in the sixteenth century. In essence, Socinianism is the precursor of Unitarianism. But, what of its ideas of the nature of man and the will of man?

1. **Socinianism and the human will.** When Socinians speak of “Original Sin,” they do not see Adam’s first sin as having any devastating effect either upon himself or upon his race. The Rocovian Catechism states (5, 10): “It is, when strengthened by the divine aid, and by that filial spirit of which I have spoken. For it is certain that the first man was so created by God as to be endowed with free will; and there was no reason why God should deprive him of it after his fall. And the equity and justice or rectitude of God will not allow that he should deprive man of the will and power of acting rightly; especially since, subsequently to that period, he requires, under a threat of punishment, that he should will and act rightly

(Deut. 30:19). Nor is there any mention of a punishment of this kind among the penalties with which God punished the sin of Adam.”

Again (5, 10):

“Is not this free will depraved by original sin?

“It is not yet agreed among its advocates themselves, what original sin is. This is certain, that by the fall of Adam the nature of man is by no means so depraved as that he is deprived of the liberty and power of obeying or not obeying God in those things which he requires of him under the threat of punishment or the promise of regard. Nor can it otherwise be shown from any testimony of Scripture, that it has this effect; while the declarations are innumerable which demonstrate the contrary clearer than the sun. And the fall of Adam, as it was but one act, could not have power to deprave his own nature, much less that of his posterity. That this was now inflicted upon him by God as punishment I have just shown. I do not deny, however, that, by the habit of sinning, the nature of man is infected with a certain stain, and a very strong disposition to wickedness; but I do deny both that this of itself is a sin, and that is of such a nature that a man, after he has imbibed the divine spirit, cannot create for himself the power of obeying God as far as He, in his infinite goodness and equity, requires.”

This “Original Sin” is only “the habit of sinning,” not guilt, “a strong disposition to wickedness” which implies a denial of the innate propensity to sin. Psalm 51:5 is explained as “a certain hyperbolic exaggeration.” The will in natural man is free, though stained by habit (sin is moral only), but how free is the will? The Catechism reads (5, 10): “Commonly there exists in men by nature but little ability to do those things which God requires of them: but all are naturally capable of inclining their will to the performance of them; and if divine assistance be obtained, the ability to execute them will not be wanting. For it is not to be thought that God exacts from any one what is beyond his power, since he is most wise and just and good; or that he denies his assistance to any one of those persons to whom he has declared his will; otherwise he could not, as he now does, justly punish the disobedient; nor indeed would the disobedient be deserving of any punishment, nor the obedient be entitled to any praise.”

“The Spirit functions in the act of regeneration as a moral stimulus, encouragement; not as the renovator (V. 10): “It is this—when God, by his spirit, imprints and seals what he has promised more

and more upon the hearts of believers, and causes them to be incited by a certain peculiar fondness for the divine promises. And also, when by the same spirit he points out more clearly to their understanding the duties of religion, furnishes their minds with discretion, especially in more difficult circumstances, directly inspires their will with a certain zeal for the vigorous practice of piety, represses the violence of opposing passions, expels sloth, and excites the mind to virtuous actions by certain sacred incentives. The first of these aids is chiefly manifested in afflictions.”

2. **Socinianism and Predestination.** Socinians reject the Augustinian concepts of predestination and election, maintaining them only upon a human base (i.e., foresight, not foreknowledge). Indeed, predestination is denominated in the Catechism as injustice, hypocrisy, imprudence, and wickedness. The Catechism states (5, 10):

“What is their opinion concerning predestination?”

“That God, by an absolutely irrevocable and unchangeable decree, did from all eternity elect and appoint unto salvation certain individuals in particular, from the whole human race who were ever to be born; and doom all the rest, by the same immutable decree, to eternal damnation;—not because he foresaw the obedience of the one or the disobedience of the other, but because such was his pleasure.

“What is your opinion of this matter?”

“That this notion of predestination is altogether false—and principally for two reasons; whereof one is, that it would necessarily destroy all religion; and the other, that it would ascribe to God many things incompatible with his nature.

“Show me how the admission of this opinion would altogether destroy religion?”

“This is evident from hence, that all things relating to piety and religion would be in us from necessity: and if this were the case, there would be no need of our efforts and labour in order to be pious. For all exertion and application is wholly superfluous where all things are done through necessity, as reason itself shows. But if exertion and application be taken away from piety and religion, piety and religion must perish.”

It should not be surprising that Socinians define faith morally as both trust and moral rectitude.

## **B. The Doctrines of Salvation in Arminianism.**

The Arminians were a Protestant party in Holland that receded from the dogmatic monergistic position of Luther and Calvin to a synergistic conception of sin and grace.

- 1. Arminianism and Original Sin.** The Arminian party accepts the doctrine of the Adamic unity, and states it in substantially the same phraseology with the Lutheran and Reformed symbols but explains it quite differently. The sin which has come upon the posterity of Adam is of the nature of a misfortune and not of a fault (not a sin that intrinsically merits reprobation, hence, evil not guilt (Arminius, *Works*. 2, 16.79): “X. But we permit this question to be made a subject of discussion: Must some contrary quality, beside (*carentiam*) the absence of original righteousness, be constituted as another part of original sin? Though we think it much more probable, that this absence of original righteousness, only, is original sin itself, as being that which alone is sufficient to commit and produce any actual sins whatsoever.”

Again he wrote (*Works*. 1, 7.486): “XVI. The whole of this sin, however, is not peculiar to our first parents, but is common to the entire race and to all their posterity, who, at the time when this sin was committed, were in their loins, and who have since descended from them by the natural mode of propagation, according to the primitive benediction. For in Adam ‘all have sinned’ (Rom. 5, 12). Wherefore, whatever punishment was brought down upon our first parents, has likewise pervaded and yet pursues all their posterity. So that all men ‘are by nature the children of wrath,’ (Eph. 2, 3) obnoxious to condemnation, and to temporal as well as to eternal death; they are also devoid of that original righteousness and holiness (Rom. 5, 12, 18, 19). With these evils they would remain oppressed forever, unless they were liberated by Christ Jesus; to whom be glory forever.”

Article three of the Five Remonstrants of 1610 is instructive “That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free will, inasmuch as he, in the state of apostasy and sin, can of and by himself either think, will, nor do any thing that is truly good (such as saving Faith eminently is); but that it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good, according to the Word of Christ, John 15:5: ‘Without me ye can do nothing’.”



It must be conceived clearly however that there is no ground for the assertion that the sin of Adam was imputed to his posterity in the sense that God actually judged the posterity of Adam to be guilty of, and chargeable with, the same sin and crime that Adam had committed.

- N.B.** Arminian theologians do not believe that the unity between Adam and his posterity was of such a nature as to make his act a common act and thereby justify the imputation of original sin as truly and properly sin. Arminius wrote (*Works*. 1, 374): “It may admit of discussion, whether God could be angry on account of original sin which was born with us, since it seems to be inflicted upon us by God as a punishment of the actual sin which had been committed by Adam, and by us in him (putatively or nominally, i.e.) . . . I do not deny that it is sin, but it is not actual sin . . . We must distinguish between actual sin and that which is the cause of other sins, and which on this very account may be denominated ‘sin’.”
2. **Arminianism and Regeneration.** Arminian theologians accept, as Luther and Calvin, the impotency of the will, but explain it so as to conflict with the reformers. Regeneration is viewed within a cooperative matrix of gracious influence and human response (i.e., grace causes man to move his will, not grace that overcomes a hostile will—synergism, not monergism). Arminius stated (*Works*. 1, 11, 526): “VII. In this state, the free will of man towards the true good is not only wounded, maimed, infirm, bent, and (*attenuatum*) weakened; but it is also (*captivatum*) imprisoned, destroyed, and lost. And its powers are not only debilitated and useless unless they be assisted by grace, but it has no powers whatever except such as are excited by Divine grace. For Christ has said, ‘Without me ye can do nothing.’ St. Augustine, after having diligently meditated upon each word in this passage, speaks thus: ‘Christ does not say, without me ye can do BUT LITTLE; neither does He say, without me you can do ANY ARDUOUS THING, nor without me ye can do it with difficulty. But he says, without me ye can do NOTHING.’ That this may be made more manifestly to appear, we will separately consider the mind, the affections or will, and (*potentiam*) the capability, as contra-distinguished from them, as well as the life itself of an unregenerate man.”

Again (*Works*. 1, 3, 252): “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 his lapsed and sinful state, man is not capable, of and by 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. When he is made a partaker of this regeneration or renovation, I consider that, since he is delivered from sin, he is capable of thinking, willing and doing.”

The Remonstrants (Article IV) reads: “That this grace of God is the beginning, continuance, and accomplishment of all good, even to this extent, that the regenerate man himself, without prevenient or assisting, awakening, following, and co-operative grace, can neither think, will, nor do good, nor withstand any temptations to evil; so that all good deeds or movements, that can be conceived, must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ. But as respects the mode of the operation of this grace, it is not irresistible, inasmuch as it is written concerning many, that they have resisted the Holy Ghost. Acts 7, and elsewhere in many places.”

A brief summary of Arminian views in the arena of the doctrines of salvation is given by Shedd (*History*, 2, 194-96): “1. The Arminians, in the controversy with the Calvinists, asserted that original sin is not guilt; and that a decree of reprobation to eternal punishment could not be found upon it. 2. The Arminians held that original sin does not include a sinful inclination of the will; it is an inherited corruption whose seat is the physical and intellectual parts, but not the voluntary. 3. The Arminians asserted that by reason of original sin, man of himself is unable to be morally perfect and holy; but inasmuch as the inherited corruption which is the cause of this inability is involuntary, the inability is a misfortune and not a fault, and therefore man is not obligated to be morally perfect without the renewing grace of the gospel. 4. Adam’s act of apostasy was purely individual, and therefore cannot be imputed to his posterity as guilt. 5. The will of man, thought not competent to perfectly obey the law of God without the assisting influence of the Holy Spirit, is competent to cooperate with that assistance. 6. The influence of the Holy Spirit is granted upon condition that the human will concurs and co-works. The success of the divine influence depends upon the use which man makes of his own will; consequently, election is conditional upon a foresight that a particular man will cooperate with the Holy Spirit.”

### C. **The Doctrines of Salvation in Wesleyanism.**

Although John Wesley has been termed an Arminian it must be realized that his theological construction differs from the Dutch Arminians; it is somewhat unique. Theologically it fits between the Dutch Arminians and English Calvinists.

1. **Wesley and Original Sin.** Wesley held to the unity of the race and the imputation of guilt (death) in Adam’s first sin. He is explicit and

Calvinistic. He wrote (*Sermons*. 1, 11, 534): “Original sin is conceived as inbred sin, as innate corruption of heart and the innermost nature, as an evil root in man from which all other sin springs forth, both inward and outward sins.” Again (*Works*. VIII, 277): “Q. 15 In what sense is Adam’s sin imputed to all mankind? A. In Adam all die; that is, (1) Our bodies then become mortal. (2) Our souls died; that is, were disunited from God. And hence, (3) We are all born with a sinful, devilish nature. By reason whereof, (4) We are children of wrath, liable to death eternal (Rom. 5:18; Eph. 2:3).”

He wrote (*Sermons*. 1, 323): “. . . the loathsome leprosy of sin, which he brought with him from his mother’s womb, which overspreads his whole soul, and totally corrupts every power and faculty thereof. He sees more and more of the evil tempers which spring from that evil root: the pride and haughtiness of spirit, the constant bias to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; the vanity, the thirst after the esteem or honour that cometh from men; the hatred or envy, the jealousy or revenge, the anger, malice, or bitterness; the inbred enmity both against God and man, which appears in ten thousand shapes; the love of the world, the self-will, the foolish and hurtful desires, which cleave to his inmost soul.”

2. **Wesley and Free Will.** At this point Wesley follows the Arminian tradition by depositing the will with ability. He wrote (*Works*. 7, 285): “Q. 23. Wherein may we come to the very edge of Calvinism? A. In ascribing all good to the free grace of God. (2) In denying all natural free-will, and all power antecedent to grace. And (3) in excluding all merit from man; even for what he has or does by the grace of God.”

Again (*Sermons*. 7, 228-29): “I am conscious to myself of one more property, commonly called liberty. This is very frequently confounded with the will; but is of a very different nature. Neither is it a property of the will, but a distinct property of the soul capable of being exerted with regard to all the faculties of the soul, as well as all the motions of the body. It is a power of self-determination; which, although it does not extend to all our thoughts and imaginations, yet extends to our words and actions in general, and not with many exceptions. I am full as certain of this, that I am free, with respect to these, to speak or not to speak, to act or not to act, to do this or the contrary, as I am of my own existence. I have not only what is termed, a ‘liberty of contradiction’—a power to do or not to do; but what is termed, a ‘liberty of contrariety’—a power to act one way, or the contrary. To deny this would be to deny the constant experience of all human kind.”

3. **Wesley and Salvation.** The two previous points are obviously contradictory (inability and freedom within a soteriological context), but,

how did Wesley correlate them? Wesley does this in a novel fashion; he postulates two works of grace to save; one to restore ability, the other to save (the first is totally of God, the second a mutual cooperation). He wrote (*Sermon*. 85, 509): “Salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) preventing grace; including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first sight transient conviction of having sinned against Him. All these imply some tendency toward life; some degree of salvation; the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling hear, quite insensible of God and the things of God. Salvation is carried on by convincing grace, usually in Scripture termed repentance; which brings a larger measure of self-knowledge, and a farther deliverance from the heart of stone.”

The sequence is simply this: (1) preparing grace (elimination of deadness), (2) repentance (sign of human acceptance of Christ’s provision—resistible), and (3) saving grace. Repentance as an act precedes regeneration chronologically. Of repentance, he wrote (*Sermons*. 2, 451-52):

“These works are not the effective cause of his acceptance with God. Yet God expects them, and looks upon them with favour, because they are the necessary token that the profession of penitence is indeed sincere. Thus good works meet for repentance, e.g., a sincere attempt to make amends for wrongs done to one’s neighbour, are in a sense a previous condition of justification.

But does not God command us to repent also? Yea, and ‘to bring forth fruits meet for repentance’—to cease, for instance, from doing evil and learn to do well? And is not both the one and the other of the utmost necessity, insomuch that if we willingly neglect either, we cannot reasonably expect to be justified at all? But if this be so, how can it be said that faith is the only condition of justification?

God does undoubtedly command us both to repent, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance; which if we willingly neglect, we cannot reasonably expect to be justified at all: therefore both repentance, and fruits meet for repentance, are in some sense, necessary to justification. But they are not necessary in the same sense with faith, nor in the same degree. Not in the same degree; for those fruits are only necessary conditionally; if there be time and opportunity for them. Otherwise a man may be justified without them . . . but he cannot be justified without faith; this or ever so many of the fruits meet for repentance, yet all this does not at all avail; he is not justified till he believes. But the moment he

believes, with or without those fruits, yea, with more or less repentance and its fruits are only remotely necessary; necessary in order to faith; whereas faith is immediately and directly necessary to justification. It remains, that faith is the only condition which is immediately and proximately necessary to justification.”

**N.B.** By this, Mr. Wesley believed that he maintained the integrity of the scriptural declarations as to spiritual death and spiritual freedom.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION.**

The purpose of this lesson has been to delineate the doctrines of sin and grace in the Reformation and Post-Reformation era. Luther and Calvin stressed monergism, absolute inability and free grace, as did most of the sixteenth century reformers. After the Reformation in the context of a growing rationalism, the Arminians and Wesleyans followed the pattern seen in Melancthon of a mild synergism (i.e., native ability and assisting grace); this is in contradistinction to the Socinians who were radically synergistic. The Arminians saw God’s Word and person best preserved by denying Adamic unity (Rom. 5:12) and depositing salvation in a graciously assisted cooperative act. Mr. Wesley held to a theological impossibility (inability and ability) by asserting two works of grace—the first restoring ability and the second, based on restored ability through repentance, saving grace. By their diverse explanations the Reformers, Arminians, and Wesleyans thought they were doing justice to the data of the Bible.

**THE DOCTRINES OF SALVATION (SIN AND GRACE)**  
**Part V: The Modern Church**

Summary:

- I. INTRODUCTION.**
- II. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION AND THE NINETEENTH CENTURY GERMAN THEOLOGIANS.**
  - A. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834).
  - B. Albrecht Ritschl (1822–89).
- III. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION AND KARL BARTH.**
- IV. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION AND THE AMERICAN THEOLOGIANS.**
  - A. In the Nineteenth Century.
  - B. In the Twentieth Century.
- V. CONCLUSION.**

**I. INTRODUCTION.**

In our discussion of the development of the doctrine of salvation, the focus has been placed upon the subject of “sin and grace;” this particular emphasis because of the inseparable union between the ability of man and the activity of God in the miracle of salvation. The purpose of this final lesson on soteriology is to understand these doctrines (“Sin and Grace”) in the last two centuries. It is both imperative and instructive to understand the crucial effect of the “Enlightenment” on the worldview of the nineteenth century. With the reference point shifting from God to man, humanism, the growing optimistic view of man’s potential and ability deeply affected, in the soteriological sphere, a reevaluation of the truth and extent of “sin and grace.” It is to these doctrines in a changing worldview that our attention turns.

**II. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION AND THE NINETEENTH CENTURY GERMAN THEOLOGIANS.**

As previously indicated, to understand the nineteenth century and its “new thinking” is to grasp the history and impact of the rise of the “Enlightenment” with its bare rationalistic hermeneutic. This has been rehearsed in previous lessons (cf. #4, 9) so that it need not consume us here.

**A. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834).**

As one approaches the nineteenth century it is imperative to grasp the questions of that century which were two: 1) What is the nature of God (immanence)? and (2) What is the relationship of Scripture to revelation? The answers to these questions provide the features, the characteristics of that time: (1) inward authority, (2) moralism, (3) optimism, and (4) Pelagianism. The last feature characterizes nineteenth century soteriology.

1. **Schleiermacher and Regeneration.** To speak of Schleiermacher's view of salvation is first to remind ourselves of his view of sin (i.e., a lack of God-consciousness, sins) and the atonement (i.e., Abelardian, an impetus to God-consciousness). Schleiermacher does have some very helpful insights from his perspective. He proposes these two vital questions with which he prefaces his discussion (*Christian Faith*, 2, 492-93): "As regards the state of the subject himself during conversion, we may take conversion to be the moment at which the entry into living fellowship with Christ is complete. This moment is the beginning of a higher form of life which only Christ can communicate, because only in Him is it originally present. It seems obvious, then, that here no casual agency can be attributed to the person who is being taken up into fellowship, for the higher form cannot be in any way derived from lower stages of life as present either in the individual or in a group of people yet to be converted. On the other hand, if we remember that the converted person, both afterwards within the living fellowship of Christ and even beforehand in the common life of sin, is, as an individual of reasonable perceptions, spontaneously active, and that in general there is never in any living being a complete moment wholly devoid of spontaneous activity, two questions are inevitable. The first is: How is the ordinary natural action of the subject going on at the moment of conversion related to the work of Christ which produces change of heart and faith? The second is: How is the presupposed passive condition during conversion related to the spontaneous activity which ensues in fellowship with Christ?"

If there is "no causal agency" attributable to the human agent, what of free will? He wrote (*Christian Faith*, 2, 493-94): "In regard to the first question, we may, without abandoning our fundamental assumption, regard the natural spontaneous action of the subject in that moment as non-co-operative. All that preparatory grace has already brought to pass within him of course co-operates, but this is itself part of the divine work of grace and not of his own action. Anything proceeding purely from his own inner life could co-operate only so far as the efficacy of divine grace was actually conditioned by these activities of his own. It cannot indeed be denied that this may happen. For the Word through which the influence of Christ is mediated can mediate only by making an impression on men, and for this the activity of his sense-faculties as well as of the inner functions of his consciousness is required. In so far as the activity of all these functions depends on the free will of man, the capacity of apprehension must therefore be allowed to exist in his natural condition. But as regards what happens after the Word has made its impression on the soul, in the attainment of its aim for men, here we cannot concede man's natural co-operation. Even the consent accompanying the reception of the Divine Word, as far as it is directed to what is essential and characteristic in it, can be ascribed only to the antecedent work of grace."

Schleiermacher defined conversion as “a change of heart” in which “existence in the common life of sin ceases and existence in fellowship with Christ begins.”

2. **Schleiermacher and Justification.** Schleiermacher understands that conversion and justification are simultaneous. Justification is conceived to have two elements (i.e., forgiveness and adoption). He wrote (*Christian Faith*, 2, 499-500): “This exposition of the matter is indeed readily liable to the misconception that each man justifies himself, although in point of fact it traces everything back to the influence of Christ. But truly, deriving justification entirely as it does from conversion, it would appear to ascribe both justification and conversion wholly to Christ and so to harmonize completely with the view that the two elements of regeneration are related to one another as sharing respectively in the perfection and in the blessedness of Christ, and are thus referred entirely to Him. This is a position for which an exact confessional basis can be found, although it certainly diverges far from the prevailing fashion of basing justification alone on a divine activity and attributes both forgiveness and adoption in a special way to God. The same thing is demanded by our own method of statement, where justification is described as a change in the relation to God. For in that, of course, an activity of God is implied, and man can be conceived only as passive. In regard to this last point we have already put ourselves in harmony with the prevailing view by not ascribing everything in this connection to the activity of the convert, even though it be an activity conditioned and evoked by Christ (as if justification were a part of sanctification or its result), but by deriving it entirely from the influence of Christ producing faith in man’s living susceptibility. In regard to the first point, however, we have to see how the formula of a divine act of justification stands related to what has been said.”

Schleiermacher is remarkably Reformed in his explanation of justification as “purely declarative act” through faith (i.e., “he holds believingly on Christ”). This faith, which “needs no supplement,” “alone” is of God. He wrote (*Christian Faith*, 2, 504): “But since faith arises only through the agency of Christ, it is clearly implied in our theorem that no natural constitution of man, nothing that takes shape in him independently of the whole series of gracious workings mediated by Christ, alters his relation to God, or effects his justification, and that no merit of any kind avails for this. From this it follows immediately that before justification all men are equal before God, despite the inequalities of their sins or their good works; this is in harmony with the self-consciousness of everyone who finds himself in fellowship with Christ, as he reviews his former share in the common life of sin.”



Again, most clearly (*Christian Faith*, 2, 504-505): “On the other hand—and this is the third pronouncement—our exposition of the facts certainly does not lead up to the customary formulae that faith is the *causa instrumentalis* of justification. These formulae, liable to many misunderstandings, are not greatly fitted to throw light upon the subject. A productive cause has no place as an essential constituent in the course of the series of activities for which it is employed. Having done its part, it is laid aside. But faith abideth always. A receptive organ, on the other hand, belongs to the sphere of nature; and the above formula might give the impression that faith is something which everyone has to produce in order that divine grace may become effective; whereas we bring with us nothing except our living susceptibility, which is the real receptive organ. It is perhaps this formula that has betrayed many theologians into maintaining the position that faith must be our own work, and that only when this work has been accomplished can the operation of divine grace begin.”

**N.B.** At this point Schleiermacher reveals his inconsistent hold on three diverse traditions: Pietism, Calvinism, and the Enlightenment. His focus is pietistic (i.e., a subjective feeling of relationship), his Christ is that of Modalistic Monarchianism whose atonement is Abelardian, yet in soteriology (i.e., Regeneration, Conversion, Justification), he reflects Reformed opinion. His illogic caused him to be a stepping stone to wider theological variance in the German schools. His attempt to secure Orthodoxy by rejecting the Enlightenment and traditional Christianity was a failure.

**B. Albrecht Ritschl (1822–89).**

The step from Schleiermacher at the headwaters of that century’s theological thought to Ritschl is a very diverse and large one. Ritschl’s position is much more clearly that of the liberal tradition of his century. As stated previously, Ritschl is Schleiermachian in definition of religion and Feuerbachian in the quest of truth. His Christ is that of the Samosotians, the adoptionists, and Christ’s atonement is Abelardian.

**1. Ritschl and the Nature of Sin.** The doctrine of sin is fundamental to Ritschl’s concept of “kingdom eschatology.” Sin is not defined objectively but comparatively to its opposite (i.e., the Good). Sin is the opposite of that which is portrayed in Christ’s vocation, the kingdom of God. He wrote (*Reconciliation*, 328): “That does not imply, however, that the fact and the explanation of sin were first made certain by revelation, or that they are articles of faith like other elements of the Christian view as a whole. For men were familiar with the fact of sin even apart from Christianity. But the determination of its nature, and the estimate of its compass and its worthlessness, are expressed in a peculiar form in

Christianity; for here they obtain ideas of God, of the supreme good, of the moral destiny of man, and of redemption, different from those which are to be found in any other religion. As a sinner every man has to judge himself rightly and completely in the light of the realities and blessings just named, and thereby also to determine the nature of the interconnection of sin within the human race. But we have not to believe in sin in general, or in a definite general conception of sin such as would fall outside of experience.”

All sin is sins (i.e., actual) to Ritschl who explicitly denies original sin and the inherited sin nature. The stress upon man’s passivity and helplessness in the traditional conceptions of Augustine goes counter to Ritschl’s pursuit of Pelagius. He wrote (*Reconciliation*, 340): “On the other hand, this affirmation of the doctrine in its present application serves rather as an argument for human weakness than for human guilt. In Augustine’s teaching, however, the latter is the point of supreme importance. But this aspect of sin, which unquestionably enters into the connotation of “the kingdom of sin,” can never be proved to belong to original sin; the two, in fact, are mutually exclusive. This can easily be demonstrated if only we recall Augustine’s line of thought. He first deduces inherited sin from the natural relation between children and their sinful parents. This, however, does not involve any guilt on the part of the former. Consequently, to prove that the quality of guilt is theirs, he affirms that Adam’s descendants have an active share in the guilt of their first parents, by dint of combining his erroneous exegesis of Rom. 5:12 with Heb. 7:9, 10. Granted that this position is true, then the sin with which men enter upon life is not inherited at all, but belongs to each in virtue of his preexistence. Hence inherited sin and personal guilt cannot be combined in thought without inaccuracy or a *sacrificium intellectus*. And this is confirmed by the literature of asceticism. Anselm and Johann Arndt alike, when treating of hereditary sin, regard it as misery, deformity, loathsomeness; guilt, however, they never connect with anything but actual sins.”

He wrote (*Reconciliation*, 331): “Hence even the dogmatic doctrine of man must not be filled up by adducing elements from the biblical creation document, but by that spiritual and moral conception of man which is revealed in the life-course of Jesus, and His intention to found the Kingdom of God.”

Sin is framed within the context of the question, What would Jesus do?

In the place of Original Sin, Ritschl has a universal moral law as the basis for the establishment of guilt (i.e., man stands guilty for breaking the kingdom law). He wrote (*Reconciliation*, 388): “That conception of the absolute obligation of the moral law which Kant developed in accordance

with the notion of freedom, provides him with the means of establishing, on a surer basis than was afforded by the Old Protestant doctrine of original sin, the corresponding subjective consciousness that we are in effect guilty in the eye of the law. For the old doctrine, though put forward with a thoroughly practical design, had never been able to produce a corresponding practical consciousness; since the attribute of guilt in original sin was never adequately proved, and indeed could not be proved.”

Guilt then arises from the misuse of the freedom of the moral law. Sin in its ethical manifestation is seen only and simply to arise from personal freedom as a contradiction of the good (i.e., the “Christian ideal of life” evident in the kingdom). He wrote (*Reconciliation*, 383-84): “Sin, which alike as a mode of action and as an habitual propensity extends over the whole human race, is, in the Christian view of the world, estimated as the opposite of reverence and trust towards God, as also the opposite of the Kingdom of God—in the latter respect forming the kingdom of sin, which possesses no necessary ground either in the Divine world-order or in man’s natural endowment of freedom, but unites all men with one another

2. **Ritschl and Justification.** Ritschl understands justification, as he does sin, within a kingdom framework. “Justification, reconciliation, the promise and task of the kingdom of God, dominate any view of Christianity that is complete” (*Reconciliation*, 35). In reality to be justified or reconciled is to change one’s attitude toward Christ and live for the ideals of the kingdom. Faith is an act of God and man, as to its origins or cause and is a “condition of justification.” Every spiritual acquisition is brought about by the incalculable interaction between the freedom of the individual and the stimulating and guiding impressions which he receives from the fellowship with others” (*Reconciliation*, 59). Faith ultimately is an existential value judgment (*Reconciliation*, 591-92): “Christ comes to act upon the individual believer on the one hand through the historical remembrance of Him which is possible in the Church, on the other hand as the permanent Author of all the influences and impulses which are due to other men, and like in nature to Himself; and this necessarily takes place in a personal, and not in a material form. Accordingly, the result of reconciliation appears in its normal completeness in subjective faith in Christ. Here it is only necessary to repeat and to bring in what has already . . . been set forth as the view of the Reformers and as the inevitable result of observation. To believe in Christ implies that we accept the value of the Divine law, which is manifest in His work, for our reconciliation with God, with that trust which, directed to Him, subordinates itself to God as His and our Father; whereby we are assured of eternal life and blessedness. Faith in Christ is neither belief in the truth of His history nor assent to a scientific judgment of knowledge such as that presented by the Chalcedonian formula. It is not a recognition of His Divine nature of such

a kind that, in affirming it, we disregard His life-work and His action for the salvation of those who have to reckon themselves as belonging to His community. In so far as trust in Him includes a knowledge of Him, this knowledge will determine the value of His work for our salvation. This value is to be decided by the fact that Christ, as the Bearer of the perfect revelation of God, through His solidarity with the Father, in the right exercise of His love and patience over the world, demonstrated his Godhead as man for the salvation of those whom, as His community, He at the same time represented before the Father by His obedience, and still represents. In this way He awakens the trust in Himself which, as passionate personal conviction, overcomes and subordinates to itself all the other motives of life, using as it does the tradition of Christ propagated in the Church, and thus putting itself into connection with all those who believe in Christ (*Reconciliation*, 591-92).”

**N.B.** Ultimately salvation is a Feuerbachian encountered of realizing what Jesus means to me!

Again, Ritschl’s kingdom soteriology is made clear when he says (*Reconciliation*, 22-23): “We must give up the question—derived from Scholastic psychology, but insoluble—how man is laid hold of, or pervaded, or filled by the Holy Spirit. What we have to do is rather to verify life in the Holy Spirit by showing that believers know God’s gracious gifts (1 Cor. 2:12), that they call on God as their Father (Rom. 8:15), that they act with love and joy, with meekness and self-control (Gal. 5:22), that they are on their guard above all against part spirit, and cherish rather a spirit of union (1 Cor. 3:1-4). In these statements the Holy Spirit is not denied, but recognized and understood. Nor is this method of procedure anything new. On the contrary, it has been employed by Schleiermacher, and the explanation of justification by faith to be found in the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* follows the same plan. If Christianity is to be made practically intelligible, no method but this can be adopted. For Christianity is made unintelligible by those formulas about the order of individual salvation, which are arrived at on the opposite view and prescribed to faith without a directly appended explanation of their practical relations and their verification.”

**N.B.** This ethical view of salvation became the dominant view of that century. This eschatological (kingdom) soteriology can be seen vividly in the History of Religions School in both Hermann Gunkel and Adolph von Harnack. Both Harnack and Wilhelm Hermann, Barth’s teachers, were Ritschlians.

### III. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION AND KARL BARTH.

Our attention turns now to Barth who represents a marked theological contrast to prevalent Ritschlian moralism of the nineteenth century.

#### A. Barth and Sin

Barth firmly holds to the historicity of our first parents and their fall as described in Genesis 3. The essence of Adam's sin is viewed as pride (*Dogmatics*. 4, 1, 414). He wrote (*Dogmatics*. 4, 1, 451): "To use the words of the Serpent in Genesis 3, when our eyes are opened to the possibility of our own exaltation in judgment we become truly blind to what is right and wrong." Again, (*Dogmatics*. 4, 1, 479): "The theology of the Enlightenment did not begin, as it is often shown to begin, with a criticism of trinitarian and Christological teaching, or of the miracles of the Bible, or of the biblical picture of the world, or of the supranaturalism of the redeeming event attested in the Bible. Its starting point in the 'rational orthodoxy' which was conservative in all these matters was a readoption of the humanistic, Arminian, Socinian and finally the acknowledged Roman Catholic rejection of what were supposed to be the too stringent assertions of the Reformers concerning the fall of man—the indissolubility of human guilt, the radical enslavement of man to sin, the *servum arbitrium*. Originally and properly enlightenment means the enlightenment that things are not quite so bad with man himself. But if we cannot, and will not, see and understand in this respect, we will necessarily be blind in other respects because—without any real sense of what was being done or to what it would necessarily lead—a natural self-understanding of man was adopted as the norm of Christian thinking. In the sphere of this understanding the assertions could not, and never can, be made."

The error of the Enlightenment is the failure to define sin biblically! Again, he wrote (*Dogmatics*. 4, 1, 500): "We cannot avoid a serious critical study of this question. There can be no objection to the Latin expression *peccatum originale* if it is not given this more exact definition. It is indeed quite adequate, telling us that we are dealing with the original and radical and therefore the comprehensive and total act of man, with the imprisonment of his existence in that circle of evil being and evil activity. In this imprisonment God speaks to him and makes Himself his liberator in Jesus Christ. But it is still his *peccatum*, the act in which he makes himself a prisoner and therefore has to be a prisoner. This is the point which is obscured by the term hereditary sin. What I do as the one who receives an inheritance is something that I cannot refuse to do, since I am not asked concerning my willingness to accept it. It is only in a very loose sense that it can be regarded as my own act. It is my fate which I may acknowledge but for which I cannot acknowledge or regard myself responsible. And yet it is supposed to be my determination for evil, the corrupt disposition and inclination of my heart, the radical and total *curvitas* and *iniquitas* of my life, and I myself am supposed to be an evil tree merely because I am the heir of Adam. It is not surprising that when

an effort is made to take the word 'heir' seriously, as has occasionally happened, the term 'sin' is taken seriously, the term 'heir' is necessarily explained in a way which makes it quite unrecognizable, being openly or surreptitiously dissolved and replaced by other, and more serious concepts. 'Hereditary sin' has a hopelessly naturalistic, deterministic and even fatalistic ring. If both parts of the term are taken seriously, it is a contradiction *in adiecto* in face of which there is no help for it but to juggle away either the one part or the other."

## **B. Barth and Justification**

To understand Barth's concept of soteriology, the place to initiate the discussion is with Lapsarianism. Barth, unlike many in the Reformed and Lutheran churches, was a supralapsarian in which the eternal decision of grace precedes the fall. And yet, election does not have the idea of "*decreterm absolutum*," which has rightly left him open to the charge of universalism though which he personally rejected the accusation. Bloesch wrote (*Jesus is Victor*, 67-68): "While Barth maintains that creation is the presupposition of reconciliation and redemption, he contends that in another sense reconciliation is prior to creation in that it has already happened in the preexistence of Jesus Christ. The Eternal Son of God in his determination to unite himself with humanity even before the creation and incarnation already assured our reconciliation and redemption (cf. 2 Tim. 1:9; Rev. 13:8 KJV). The creation signifies the beginning of the revelation of the eternal decision of reconciliation and redemption which is universal and all-inclusive in its scope. This eternal decision is given historical confirmation and concreteness in the sacrificial life and death of Jesus Christ. In the cross of Christ we see the divine verdict of election and salvation, which is pronounced on all, though not all have been awakened to its far-reaching cosmic significance."

Barth conceives of justification as pardon that is not theoretical but both actual and complete. He wrote (*Dogmatics.*, 4, 1, 596-97): "But what does the forgiveness of sins mean? It is only in appearance that its reference is merely to the past. It has this reference. But only in the sense that it denotes the line which is put under his past, making it the past and marking it off as such. But at what point in my past do I see this line clearly put under it? Even if I thought I knew some such place, what about all that has become the past since? and with what justification and certainty can I affirm that it is put under it as I come from my past? It is only in this way that this cancellation can be the content of the promise addressed to men. We ask: What is meant by this cancellation? Forgiveness obviously does not mean to make what has happened not to have happened. Nothing that has happened can ever not have happened. The man who receives forgiveness does not cease to be the man whose past (and his present as it derives from his past) bears the stain of his sins. The act of the divine forgiveness is that God sees and knows this stain infinitely better than the man himself, and abhors it infinitely more than he does even in his deepest penitence—yet He does not take it into consideration, He overlooks it, He covers it, He passes it by, He puts it

behind Him. He does not charge it to man, He does not “impute” it (2 Cor. 5:19), He does not sustain the accusation to which man has exposed himself, he does not press the debt with which he has burdened himself, He does not allow to take place the destruction to which he has inevitably fallen victim. That God forgives means that He pardons. but the divine pardoning is not a weak remission. As pardoning, it is the great—we might almost say the wrathful—act of divine power and defiance. God proves His superiority to all the contradiction and opposition arrayed against Him. He proves His unshakable lordship over man. He does so by despising the sin of man, by ignoring it although it has happened, by not allowing His relationship to man to be determined by it. Again, the divine pardoning is not an unlawful remission. As pardoning, it is the exercise of His supreme right, and at the same time the restoration of a state of right between Himself and man, the effective assertion of His glory in relation to man. Again, it is not merely a verbal remission. As pardoning, it is the effectual and righteous alteration of the human situation from its very foundation. If God’s sentence concerning man is that He will know nothing of this stain, then the stain is washed away and removed, and although man still bears it, in spite of it he is without stain, in spite of his wrong he is in the right. The divine pardoning is not a remission ‘as if’ man were not a sinner. As pardoning, it is the old man that he was and still is, is no longer that man, but is already another man, the man he will be, the new man. That is the forgiveness of sins as the final stroke under man’s past.”

Further, he wrote (*Dogmatics*. 4, 1, 599): “Where and when man trusts the promise, where and when he dares to treat it as directed to himself, to apply it to himself, to accept it as true of himself, there the forgiveness of sins takes place, that line is drawn, the new situation from which he can set out is created. There he receives forgiveness, the divine pardon, and the freedom of a new and the only true capacity. There he already has it, and he can and should dare to live as one who is forgiven.”

This justification (i.e., pardon, forgiveness) is through faith alone, never on account of faith, grace, not works. Barth stated (*Dogmatics*. 4, 1, 614-15): “The combination of the words *dikaiousune* and *pisteo* obviously a special element in the theology of Paul, he spoke of *dikaiousunh pistew*” (Rom. 4:13), or *th*” *pistew*” (Rom. 4:11), of *dik ek pistew*” (Rom. 9:30, 10:6), and in Phil. 3:9 of *dik dia pistew*” and *epi th pistei*. In Paul all these combinations indicate the place where and the manner in which man’s relationship to the redemptive activity accomplished in the judgment and sentence of God, His *dikaion*, the *dikaion* *qeou* in its actuality, is known and accepted and apprehended, is in fact, ‘realized’ on the part of man. There is no instance of the combination *dik dia thn pistin*. This means that from the standpoint of biblical theology the root is cut of all the later conceptions which tried to attribute to the faith of man a merit for the attainment of justification or co-operation in its fulfillment, or to identify faith, its rise and continuance and inward and outward work with justification. The pardon of sinful man in the judgment is God’s work, His *dikaion*, His *dikaion*. Paul has not

marked this off so sharply from any supposed or ostensible *dik ek nomou* or *en monw* or *ex erywn*, from any *idia dik.* (Rom. 10:3) or *emh dik.* (Phil. 3), from any justification of man by his own attitude and action, merely in order to accept this other human attitude and action, the work of faith, as the true means to create the right of man. As a human attitude and action faith stands over against the divine attitude and action described as *dikaiothn*, without competing with it, or preparing it, or anticipating it, or co-operating with it, let alone being identical with it.”

Again (*Dogmatics*. 4, 1, 621): “We must bear all this in mind if we are to understand the great negation in the Pauline and Reformation doctrine of justification by faith, and especially Luther’s *sola fide*: the opposition of faith to all and every work; the two statements (1) that no human work as such either is or includes man’s justification (not even the work of faith as such), but (2) that the believer is actually the man justified by God. This second and positive statement obviously needs to be worked out and established, and we must now address ourselves to this task. But clearly it can be meaningful only when the way is cleared for it by the first and negative statement, i.e., when the faith of the man justified by God is opposed to all his works (even the work which he does when he believes), and opposed in such a way that there can be no returning to the view that his works might either be or include his justification. The one who is righteous by faith can only live in an atmosphere which is purified completely from the noxious fumes of the dream of other justifications. That is what Paul and the Reformers said in their negative statement.”

It is interesting that Barth concludes his essay, “The Justification of Man,” by quoting the Heidelberg Catechism (Q. 60, 61, 64)!

**N.B.** Barth’s view of Faith has been soundly debated. He does not see faith so much as a combination of *assensus*, *fiducia* and *notitia*, but simply *notitia* (i.e., knowledgeable of one’s election). The stress in faith is awareness that you are chosen. Perhaps, a stress he developed in reaction to the existentialism of Bultmann.

Bloesch wrote in summary (*Jesus is Victor*, 38-39):

“Barth’s understanding of the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation) also reflects an objectivistic stance. In traditional Protestant orthodoxy the *ordo salutis* connotes sharply distinguishable steps in the salvific process: a demarcation is often made between justification, calling, regeneration, conversion, sanctification, etc. Barth sees the *ordo salutis* as different moments of the one redemptive occurrence of the humiliation and incarnation of Jesus Christ, an occurrence that has its foundation in eternity and its realization in time. Election, conversion, reconciliation, and redemption are all aspects of the eternal decision of Jesus Christ to identify and unite Himself with fallen humanity. Justification and



sanctification are not two separate divine actions but facets of the event of reconciliation, though he does not identify them. Faith is simply the subjective response to the one event of salvation, which encompasses election, reconciliation, calling, conversion, etc.

At the same time a case could be made that Barth does have an order of salvation after a fashion in that he sees the eternal decision of Jesus Christ unfolded in creation and reconciliation and culminating in an eschatological redemption. His stress is on the simultaneity of the one act of salvation, but he nevertheless seems to affirm a temporal sequence in his distinction between creation, reconciliation, and the eschatological fulfillment.”

#### IV. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION AND THE AMERICAN THEOLOGIANS.

##### A. In the Nineteenth Century.

As have been summarized previously (Lesson #17), American theology shifted away from its Calvinistic orientation in the Post-Revolutionary era due to the blighting effects of the Enlightenment that penetrated the country through Deism and Unitarianism, as well as democratical emphases in general. The Enlightenment brought a shift in traditional beliefs as evidenced in New England Congregationalism where Grotianism became popular.

1. **New England Theology and Sin.** In brief, the concept of necessitated, constituted sinfulness was rejected for a concept of sin that was merely “sins” (actions). Samuel Hopkins, leader of the Hopkinsian branch of New England theology wrote (*Works*. 1, 218): “Sin does not take place in the posterity of Adam in consequence of his sin, or that they are not constituted sinners by his disobedience, as a punishment, or the penalty of the law coming upon them for his sin. It is not to be supposed that the offence of Adam is imputed to them to their condemnation, while they are considered as in themselves, in their own persons, innocent; or that they are guilty of the sin of their first father, antecedent to their own sinfulness. . . . a certain connection between the first sin of Adam and the sinfulness of his posterity; so that as he sinned and fell under condemnation, they, in consequence of this, became sinful and condemned. Therefore, when Adam had sinned, by this the character and state of all his posterity were fixed, and they were, by virtue of the covenant made with Adam, constituted or made sinners like him; and, therefore, were considered as such before they had actual existence. It was made certain, and known and declared to be so, that all mankind should sin as Adam had done, and fully consent to his transgression, and join in the rebellion which he began; and

by this bring upon themselves the guilt of their father's sin, by consenting to it, joining with him in it and making it their own sin."

Nathaniel Emmons could write (*Works*. 3, 123): "Nothing can be more repugnant to Scripture, reason, and experience, than the notion of our deriving a corrupt heart from our first parents. If we have a corrupt heart, as undoubtedly we have, it is altogether our own, and consists in our evil affections and other evil exercises, and not in any moral stain, pollution, or depravity derived from Adam."

Jonathan Edward the Younger wrote (*Works*. 2, 270): "That Adam's sin should be ours, and that we on account of it should be judged and condemned as sinners, or that we should be the same person as Adam, or that God should so consider or suppose us, has appeared to many to be absurd, impious, and impossible."

Change in the traditional understanding of sin brought severe reaction in the churches. Perhaps the most vivid example of this was the heresy trial of Albert Barnes, a Presbyterian, in 1833. The charges brought against him were:

- "1. 'that all sin consists in voluntary action' (105).
- "2. 'that sin results in physical death only' (109).
- "3. 'that unregenerate men are able to keep the commandments and convert themselves to God' (111).
- "4. 'that faith is an act of the mind and is itself imputed for righteousness' (119).
- "5. 'that Adam is not the federal head of the race' (126).
- "6. 'that Adam's first sin is not imputed' (129).
- "7. 'that mankind is not liable for punishment as a result of Adam's action' (131).
- "8. 'that Christ did not die a vicarious substitutionary death' (143).
- "9. 'that Christ's righteousness is not imputed for the sinner's justification' (145).
- "10. 'that justification is simply pardon' (149)."

**N.B.** What I am attempting to demonstrate is that theology took a radical turn in America due to the Enlightenment in the early nineteenth century, which has had remarkable consequences in American theological development (i.e., the advent of American Religious Liberalism).

This shift can be readily seen in the gospel preaching of the antebellum evangelist Charles Finney (1792–1875). He explicitly

repudiated Original Sin when he wrote (*Systematic Theology*, 256): “The dogma of constitutional moral depravity is a part and parcel of the doctrine of necessitated will. It is a branch of a grossly false and heathenish philosophy. How infinitely absurd, dangerous, and unjust, then, to embody it in a standard of Christian doctrine, to give it the place of an indispensable article of faith, and denounce all who will not swallow its absurdities, as heretics!”

Again (*Systematic Theology*, 231): “Moral depravity, as I use the term, does not consist in, nor imply a sinful nature, in the sense that the substance of the human soul is sinful in itself. It is not a constitutional sinfulness. It is not an involuntary sinfulness. Moral depravity, as I use the term, consists in selfishness; in a state of voluntary committal of the will to self-gratification.”

2. **New England Theology and Grace.** An obvious corollary of non-constitutional sinfulness is a marked stress on the ability of man to save himself. This became a dominant theme. Dr. Finney wrote relative to Free Will (*Systematic Theology*, 350): “The Bible everywhere, and in every way, assumes the freedom of the will. This fact stands out in strong relief upon every page of divine inspiration. . . . The strong language often found in scripture upon the subject of man’s inability to obey God, is designed only to represent the strength of his voluntary selfishness and enmity against God, and never to imply a proper natural inability. It is, therefore, a gross and most injurious perversion of scripture, as well as a contradiction of human reason, to deny the natural ability, or which is the same thing, the natural free agency of man, and to maintain a proper natural inability to obey God, and the absurd dogma of a gracious ability to do our duty.”

This led him to say that justification was not a forensic or judicial act, this being a corollary of his Grotian notions of the Atonement (*Systematic Theology*, 382): “It is proper to say here that. . . . those of his school do not intend that sinners are justified by their own obedience to law, but by the perfect and imputed obedience of Jesus Christ. They maintain that, by reason of the obedience to law which Christ rendered when on earth, being set down to the credit of elect sinners, and imputed to them, the law regards them as having rendered perfect obedience in him, or regards them as having perfectly obeyed by proxy, and therefore pronounces them just, upon the condition of faith in Christ.”

- Concerning regeneration his views need no comment (*Systematic Theology*, 285): “It is not a change in substance of soul or body. If it were, sinners could not be required to effect it. Such a change would not constitute a change of moral character. No such change is needed, as the sinner has all the

faculties and natural abilities requisite to render perfect obedience to God. All he needs is to be induced to use these powers and attributes as he ought. . . . Regeneration then is a radical change of the ultimate intention, and of course, of the end or object of life. . . . A selfish ultimate choice is, therefore, a wicked heart, out of which flows every evil, and a benevolent ultimate choice is a good heart, out of which flows every good and commendable deed. . . . Regeneration . . . must consist in a change in the attitude of the will, or a change in its ultimate choice . . . to the interests of His kingdom.”

It is not at all surprising that he makes faith a virtue, the “reception and the practice of all known or perceived truth,” (*Systematic Theology*, 377) and repentance a change of external conduct which is “required of all sinners” (*Systematic Theology*, 365).

**N.B.** The point is that the nineteenth century American view of “Sin and Grace” underwent significant changes from the previous century. This is crucial as the revisionist “New England Opinions” are the fertile soil of further theological decay eventually giving rise to classic American Liberalism.

## **B. In the Twentieth Century.**

As stated previously, German theological opinions became dominant, reflective of Ritschl in the decades prior to the world wars as Classic Liberalism and after World War II in Neo-Liberalism. In the turbulent 1960s, then “fad Theologies” emerged which ultimately were the spill-over of radical rationalism of the Post-Bultmannianism. Religion is simply psychoanalyzed in a Feuerbain assertion reminiscent of Buber’s famous I-thou relationship. Religion faded into absurdity!!

## **V. CONCLUSION.**

The purpose of this lesson has been to trace the doctrines of sin and grace in the last two centuries, the picture is difficult. In German theology Schleiermacher’s attempt to preserve Christianity through subjective experience actually opened the way for a swift departure from the faith. Ritschl set the tone of a more logical system based upon Enlightenment presuppositions—sin is community disregard for kingdom values and salvation is eschatologically oriented. Barth is a cautious refreshment and marked contrast to the previous century with a biblical concept of sin and forgiveness although there are hidden difficulties (i.e., supralapsarianism, faith). In America, changes in the traditional views of sin and grace became evident in the Post-Revolutionary era as sin became “sins” only and grace became “only a gracious side.” The American stage was set for further changes already in progress in Germany. I find myself in sympathy with Archibald Alexander who wrote: “Now we confess ourselves to be of the number of those who believe, whatever reproach it may bring upon us from a certain quarter, that if

the doctrine of imputation be given up the whole doctrine of original sin must be abandoned. And if this doctrine be relinquished then the whole doctrine of redemption must fall, and what may then be left of Christianity they may contend for; but for ourselves, we shall be of the opinion that what remains will not be worth fighting for.”