

The Church of the Servant King
Soteriology Series

SO_6_Predestination & Election – Part 8 –
The Historical Background – Post Reformation to Present

Read Passages: Acts 2:23; 4:28; 13:48; Rom 8:28; scan Rom 9-11; Ephesians 1:3-14; 3:11; 1 Pet 1:2, 20; 2:6

Introduction

Prior to launching this lesson, I believe that it will be helpful to recap some of the major figures affecting the historical development of the doctrine of predestination and election who we have covered to date. I will attempt to align them with the theological position that they represented.

Century	Augustinian	Semi-Pelagian	Pelagian	Peripheral People & Movements
4 th & 5 th	Augustine (354-430)	John Cassian (360-435) & Massilians - redefined such concepts as predestination, grace, and free will thereby making God's actions a response to man's initial action. Denied complete moral ability (i.e. Pelagianism) as well as Augustine's complete moral inability. The error – the notion that salvation was the result of grace and works.	Pelagius (360-420)	Council of Ephesus (431) – condemned Pelagianism
6 th		Gregory the Great (540-604) Romish theology – semi-Pelagian influenced ideas of penance and progressive satisfaction for sin		Synod of Orange (529) – condemned semi-Pelagianism

9 th	Gottschalk (804-869) - stress the doctrine of predestination to the neglect of other doctrines; double predestination; carried Augustine's doctrine to its extreme logical conclusions			Hinkmar , Archbishop of Rheims persecutes Gottschalk; believes predestination is a result of the foreknowledge of God
11 th thru 13 th	Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109)			
	Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) – prevenient grace vs. co-operating grace			
14 th				John Wycliffe (1328-1384) – visible church not needed for salvation; Lollards – itinerant preachers
15 th				Gutenberg Printing Press (ca. 1450)
				Erasmus (1466-1517) – religious humanist – man doesn't need priest
16 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) ➤ Martin Luther (d. 1546) 			Philip Melancthon (1497-1560) – wrote the Augsburg confession – the official statement of the Lutheran position; began to ascribe certain measure of freedom to the will.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ John Calvin (1509 – 1564) 			Johann von Staupitz vs. Ockhamists – Staupitz influenced Calvin; Ockhamists believed in foreknowledge

	➤ Theodore Beza (1519-1605) – protégé of Calvin; representative of the Protestants in France – Huguenots			Felix Manz & Conrad Grebel (1498-1526) – desired greater separation from the Roman Catholic Church; led Anabaptist movement
Continuation in the Present Lesson				
Century	Augustinian	Semi-Pelagian	Pelagian	Peripheral People & Movements
16 th (Cont'd)			Socinianism – led by Faustus (1525-62) and Laelius Socinus (b. 1539) – represented a revival of the Pelagian heresy	
16 th – 17 th		Arminianism – led by Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) – views ultimately expressed via John Wesley – founder of Methodism		
	Synod of Dort (1618) – ecumenical council held in Holland; Arminians were defendants; adopted Calvinistic positions			
18 th		John Wesley (1703-1791)		
	Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) – leader in the Great Awakening			
19 th – 20 th Century	Karl Barth (1886-1968) – modified view of election			

Significant Movements and Persons (16th Century to Present)

In this lesson, we'll try to wrap up our overview of the historical background for the subject of predestination and election. I'm sure that there are other movements and/or

individuals who have contributed to the development of this doctrine; however, today there are three general categories or camps which exist within evangelical Protestantism in regard to the subject with hybrids of all three, i.e. the Reformed (strong Calvinist), the Free Grace (moderate Calvinist), and the Arminian views. The view that I hold and which I will be developing in future lessons could be classified as a variant within the Free Grace camp. We'll begin developing an understanding of the Calvinist view of the subject in our next lesson. But first, we need to conclude our overview of the historical background for the subject.

Socianism – 16th Century

This movement was begun by Faustus (1525-62) and Laelius Socinus (b. 1539). It represented a of the Pelagian heresy. It stemmed from a view that Adam, when created, was not created with any righteousness or holiness. He was basically neutral. Therefore, he had no righteousness to loose at the Fall. In other words, this view ignores the fact that in the original creation, God's essence demanded that God could only create that which satisfied His righteousness and substitutes an idea of creation as neutral. It views men in the same position today when they are born, i.e. neutral, without any aspect of his nature that is prone to sin. Man has plenty of bad examples to follow, but is capable of producing "the good," i.e. a good satisfactory to God's righteousness. "They [mankind] need no Saviour nor any extraordinary interposition of God to secure their salvation. No change in their moral nature is required, and no provision for effecting such a change was made."¹

Thus, Socianism denied that man possessed a depraved nature. It thereby rejected (not just modified as did semi-Pelagian thought, but rejected) one of the principle tenets of Augustinian and Calvinistic thought, i.e. the total depravity of man. Also, if man was capable of producing "the good" on his own, there was no need for a "limited atonement," an "unconditional election," or an "irresistible grace." This movement was just another manifestation of Satan's lie in the angelic conflict that has been present through the centuries since the church began that distracts from man's need for a savior, focuses upon the inherent goodness in man, unknowingly succumbs to messianic/millennial kingdom delusions apart from the presence of The King, and is embodied in modern theological liberalism that is amilleniarian in its eschatology.

Arminianism – Late 16th thru 18th Centuries

This movement was founded by Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) and popularized by John Wesley (1703-1791), the founder of Methodism. Arminius was a first a disciple of Beza and a strict Calvinist, but later changed his views in favor of views akin to semi-Pelagianism. His position was based in part upon ideas of universal grace and free will. He denied the doctrine of reprobation and adjusted the position of original sin. His followers articulated their position in five articles known as the *Remonstrance*.²

Arminius taught that the guilt of Adam's original sin is not imputed to his descendants; however, sin as a weakness or disease is passed on from father to son. Therefore, man is not under a sentence of condemnation, but he possesses a weakened nature that makes him incapable on his own of producing "the good." Nevertheless, man can as a result of possessing free will prepare himself (have positive volition) to turn to God and do His will. Election was based upon foreseen faith, obedience, and perseverance. Reprobation was based upon foreseen unbelief, disobedience, and persistence in sin. In reality, Arminius did not depart that far from the Reformers' beliefs. However, as we shall see, his followers at the Synod of Dort did adopt views that departed further from the Reformers than did Arminius.

¹ Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1937), 150.

² Ibid.

The error of Arminianism is that in its denial of the Augustinian/Calvinistic view of the total depravity of man (i.e. the “T” in TULIP), the imputation of the guilt of Adam’s original sin is rejected. In addition, Arminian thought eventually included the idea that the believer could loose his salvation. Thus, it embodied ideas contrary to the Calvinistic idea of perseverance of the saints, i.e. the “P” in TULIP.

As it matured, Arminianism proposed a multifaceted theory of grace that included 1) prevenient or sufficient grace; 2) the grace of evangelical obedience; and 3) the grace of perseverance.³ Prevenient grace includes the notion of the common ministry of the Holy Spirit to the unbeliever to allow him to counteract the effect of the sin nature and co-operate with God in regeneration.

In the middle of the 18th Century, John Wesley modified Arminian thought and developed what is known as Wesleyan Arminianism. The significant points of difference were in regard to 1) Adam’s original sin and guilt is imputed to man, but cancelled by the justification of all men in Christ (a distorted view of “universal atonement”); 2) introduced the concept of prevenient grace (see above).⁴ As an Arminian theologian, Wesley believed in the ability of man to fall from grace.⁵

Synod of Dort (1618)

This was an ecumenical synod that was summoned by the government of the Netherlands and consisted of 84 members and 18 political delegates. Forty-eight of the members were Hollanders. As we’ve noted in previous lessons, Holland was a refuge for Reformers seeking escape from the persecution of the Roman Catholic Church. The Arminians were not seated as members, but appeared only as defendants. Over 150 sessions were held in addition to a large number of conferences. The outcome was a rejection of the *Remonstrance* which articulated the Arminian position and the adoption of a very Calvinistic oriented position. The Synod affirmed the doctrine of double predestination, the total depravity of man, and the idea that man can do nothing to effect his salvation.

Note Regarding the Post-Reformation Period

It is not necessary to discuss the historical background of the post-Reformation period at length. There have been no controversies that have resulted in any new elements having been introduced to the debate over the subject of predestination and election. The three major traditions that I mentioned earlier still predominate.

Jonathan Edwards – (1703 –1758)

I mention Edwards not so much because of his contribution to the development of this doctrine, but because of the fact that he represents a Calvinist who had a tremendous impact upon this country through his evangelistic messages during the Great Awakening (1720-1740). The most famous is “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” He graduated from Yale in 1720 at the age of 17 and after serving as a pastor and missionary, became the third President of

³ Ibid, 151. See also Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 634.

⁴ See Berkhof, 155-156 and Erickson, 853, 914 and 920.

⁵ Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Company, 1992), 286.

Princeton.⁶ There were certainly other great evangelists during this period, but perhaps none so well-known as Edwards.

Karl Barth (1886-1968)

I mention Karl Barth due to the fact that Barth was a leader in the movement known as neo-orthodoxy that emerged in the early 20th Century in response to the movement known as liberalism that arose during the last half of the 1800's. Liberalism denied the infallibility and authority of Scripture, introduced relativism, and included an idea of human ability that viewed history as progressing toward a utopian environment. These ideas were shattered with the outbreak of WWI. Barth was a German who studied Calvin extensively. He was among a small group of German theologians who opposed the Nazi regime.

Barth introduced some interesting twists to traditional Calvinistic thought on the issue of election. In traditional Calvinist thought, God elects certain individuals. Barth believed that God elected Jesus Christ. But in the election of Jesus Christ, the entire human race has been elected. All do not live like it though. Barth does not address the question of whether those who have thus been elected but refuse to live like it are really saved. One can see the error of this position.

Conclusion

There is obviously much more that we could have studied in regards to the historical background of this doctrine; however, this overview should suffice for now. We all should have a greater appreciation for the two or three major Protestant positions on the subject as well as a frame of reference filled with some vocabulary to which I will refer in future lessons. This series of lessons was necessary because I know of no other doctrine other than dispensations that divides the Protestant Church as much as this doctrine.

⁶ Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 367 and Bruce Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1995), 346-347, 377.