

THE DOCTRINE 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 world view 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 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 very 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 "*decretem 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 *dikaioisune* and *pisteo* obviously a special element in the theology of Paul, he spoke of *dikaioisunh 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 *dikaioun*, the *dikaioisun 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 *dikaiosth*. 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 *dikaion*, 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 state 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 Feuerbian 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.”