

Errors of the Saumur School

The problem of searching for compromise

Though this subject may seem a bit obscure to some readers, there is great value in looking at the theological errors that came out of Saumur as they have given rise to many misconceptions current in modern evangelicalism. For example, an Amyraldian view of salvation is now extremely common amongst church-goers, even though most do not realise this (some erroneously call this view 'Calminianism' as a hybrid of Calvinism and Arminianism), and this system was first formally proposed at Saumur in the early 17th century.

We will investigate the key errors one-by-one and the import for today's believer will become clear.

The school of Saumur

Saumur is situated in western France between the Loire and Thouet rivers and is surrounded by the vineyards which produce some of France's finest wines. Several famous people are identified with Saumur including: fashion designer Coco Chanel; actor Dominique Pinon (*Delicatessen* 1991 / *Alien Resurrection* 1997); and the actress Capucine, leading lady in the movie *The Pink Panther* (1964).

The school of Saumur was a French Protestant theological seminary that has become identified with three errors evaluated in this paper. Joshua Placaeus was the chief mind behind mediate imputation, while Moses Amyrald was the main progenitor of mediate regeneration and Hypothetical Universalism. It is interesting that the motives behind these errors was irenic, seeking to enable closer unity between opposing Protestant factions (especially in the case of Amyraldism); yet these attempts provided the foundation for serious theological errors, and error grows. As the years passed the heresies of this school encouraged a false understanding of the atonement (as many errors do) based upon another 'middle way', namely Governmental Theory proposed by Hugo Grotius.

This historical interlude demonstrates the great danger of seeking a compromised theological position. People make a big mistake by transferring principles regarding human conduct to statements about divine truth. In the world of human intercourse, compromise is often necessary and helpful in maintaining unity and good relations. Love covers a multitude of sins and we must bear with one another's human frailties. However, when it comes to theological statements (or 'dogma') then there can be no such compromise. Truth is truth and it is found clearly demonstrated in scripture. Our job is to seek out the teachings, or doctrines, of scripture and systematise them to enable people to understand what the Bible teaches. There can be no compromise in this and any watering down of the truth is blasphemy, an offence to God who inspired the words of scripture to establish his doctrine.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word 'dogma' refers to a principle, or set of principles, laid down by an authority as incontrovertibly true. Thus dogma (and being dogmatic) is a very good, indeed a necessary thing and a far cry from its derogatory use in human parlance today. If we are not dogmatic, then we are either compromised or double-

mind, and this creates instability of mind (Jm 1:8) and wrong behaviour. It is far better to admit a lack of understanding in a certain subject, and continue investigations, rather than accept a compromised, open-ended, non-dogmatic position.

Is God dogmatic? To be sure he is. His word is certain, authoritative, clear and final. He does not change in his views and does not water down his position but demands obedience to it. If we are going to obey God, then we need to know what he says, and this means that we will form dogmatic statements about theology; clear teachings about God and his decrees. It is noteworthy that the ministry of the Holy Spirit always brings clarity and conviction, while the effect of satanic temptation is usually cloudy, confused and contradictory. Compromised, uncertain, unclear, self-contradictory doctrine is always the result of satanic activity, not of God.

The school of Saumur was a classic example of the search for compromise to unite opposing brethren. This is contradictory to the statements of the apostles who demanded conformity to their teaching of Christ and condemnation of opposing positions (see appendix one). Thus it was inevitable that Saumur would fall astray into one heresy after another, creating havoc in the minds of its followers for many years up to this very day.

Amyraldism [or Hypothetical Universalism]

While folk may wince at the thought of a summary of Hypothetical Universalism, feeling it is of no consequence to them, the fact is that very many modern evangelicals hold this, or a similar, position on the atonement. If you believe that God loves everybody and wants to save everybody, but in the end only the elect will be saved – then you are an Amyraldian. If you claim to be a Four-Point Calvinist, you are not Reformed but are an Amyraldian. If you believe in the ‘Free Offer’ or ‘well-meant offer’ as preached today you are likely to be an Amyraldian. The only difference for the Arminian is that he believes God loves everyone, desires to save everyone and Jesus died to save all - if they believe. The Arminian teaches that those saved are saved by their free will, the Amyraldian that those saved are elect and saved by God. Both positions dishonour God by teaching that he has desires which he cannot fulfil; that he loves all but fails to save all. The Amyraldian also avers that God contradicts himself - he decrees something that he doesn’t want or intend to fulfil; most Amyraldians justify this by teaching two contradictory wills in God.

Amyraldism (not Amyraldianism!) formally began in the Saumur school with the teachings of Moses (or Moise) Amyraut (1596-1664). In common with the academic protocols of the time his name was Latinised to Amyraldus (just as Jean Cauvin became John Calvinus). While Amyrald’s name is most closely associated with Hypothetical Universalism, his ideas were gained from his professor of Divinity, John Cameron (1580-1626).

Amyrald’s purpose was to effect conciliation between Reformed and Lutheran theology and he did this by positing a universalism in the divine decree to salvation (i.e. that God wills the salvation of everyone) on condition of faith. However, the universalism of man’s sin means that all men are not actually saved, thus the universalism is merely hypothetical. Despite man’s sin, God is still good to all, loves all, and desires the salvation of all but he elects only a portion of the human race to salvation. So Amyraldism is universal in theory but particular in practice and is thus utterly self-contradictory. God wills the salvation of all but actually only chooses some.

This theological system was also used to mediate between the Reformed and the Arminians (Arminian universalism was similar to the Lutheran position post Luther). In theological terms it posited a contradictory twofold decree:

1. The decree to send Christ to save all men on condition of faith in the Gospel.
2. Since God saw this purpose would fail due to man's sin, a second decree followed to give the elect grace to believe.

Like Arminianism, Amyraldism teaches a universal atonement. However, unlike Arminianism there is discrimination, or particularism, of the divine decree, which is not before the cross but only upon the application of redemption by the Spirit. Thus the cross is universal in design but the application is particular. This puts the Holy Spirit's work and the work of Christ in opposition. But the work of Christ and the Spirit are the fulfilment of the divine decree, the Father's eternal purpose, so this posits inconsistency in the Father's plan.

Since the universalism of the cross in Amyraldism is not matched by universalism of salvation for all men in reality, only some are saved, then the work on the cross (as in Arminianism) is not complete, substitutionary or effective. If the work on the cross is for all, but not all are saved, then Christ did not die savingly or as a substitute for anyone, *'since he did not do for those who are saved anything that he did not do for those who are lost, and the one thing that he did not do for the lost was save them. ... Christ by his death actually procured nothing that guarantees the salvation of any man.'* [R. Reymond, *Systematic Theology*, p479.] For the Calvinist, the cross actually paid the price of sin for a specific group of people. Christ died as a penal substitute for the elect alone and secured their redemption.

As well as Amyrald (and Cameron), other Saumur professors took up this position including Testardus. Its mollifying tendency was attractive to English preachers such as John Davenent, Wardlaw, John Brown and James Richards and particularly Richard Baxter. The idea was accepted by many New England theologians and was a part of New Haven theology (e.g. Taylor, Park and Beman). The Marrow-men (e.g. Thomas Boston & the Erskines) in Scotland came very close to this position, though some were orthodox but used careless phraseology.¹ Those that split hairs and held to the idea of Christ being 'dead for all' (as opposed to 'having died for all') were virtually Amyraldian.

The root error is that God loves all men, which leads to a supposed divine desire to save everyone and thus a universal offer of salvation; but in the end the decree is particular since only the elect receive grace to believe. Thus there is contradiction both in the divine person and the divine decree.

This shows the great danger of loose talk in Gospel preaching. We have no right to misrepresent God and tell an audience that he loves all men, that he desires to save all men or that the cross was specifically for this or that person. Biblical language must be used in evangelism based upon God's sovereignty – God commands all men to repent (Acts 17:30), seek mercy from him with your whole heart (Deut 4:29; Matt 7:7).

¹ **What was the doctrine of the "Marrow Men" in Scotland?** The "Marrow of Modern Divinity" was published in England, 1646, and republished in Scotland by James Hog of Carnock, 1726. The "Marrow Men" were Hog, Thomas Boston, and Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, and their followers in the Secession Church. They were perfectly orthodox with respect to the reference of the atonement to the elect. Their peculiarity was that they emphasized the general reference of the atonement to all men. They said Christ did not die for all, but he is dead for all, i. e., available. "God made a deed of gift and grant of Christ unto all men." They distinguished between his "giving love," which was universal, and his "electing love," which was special ("Marrow of Mod. Divinity"). A A Hodge; *Outlines of Theology*. Art. 'Atonement'.

Mediate Regeneration

There are two aspects to this matter.

The teaching of Saumur

The first is another error proposed by Amyraut and taught by Cameron and Pajon. It taught that although the Holy Spirit illuminates the intellect in regeneration, he does not act upon the will. This leaves the door open for the expression of human free will in conversion. Amyraut averred that the illumination of the Spirit was so conclusive that the will automatically followed. The orthodox position is that the Spirit acts directly (immediately) upon the will in regeneration and that the whole conversion process is an act of God. Thus scripture explains that both faith and repentance are gifts of God (*The gift of faith*: Acts 14:27, 18:27; Eph 2:8-9; Phil 1:29; Jn 6:29. *The gift of repentance*: Acts 5:31, 11:18; Rm 2:4; 2 Tim 2:25-26).

Again Amyraut sought a mediate position between particularism and universalism by allowing man a part to play in salvation – by utilising his free will without direct divine aid. By trying to pave the way for unification of opposing Protestant parties (initially Calvinism and Lutheranism) he gave rise to another error.

A modern variation

Some evangelical folk so emphasise the preaching of the word in conversion that they speak of the Spirit using preaching as the means or instrument to regenerate men. Thus regeneration is mediate, by use of means instead of immediate, or direct. Martin Luther emphasised this as well as some modern teachers.

What is ignored here is that regeneration is a creative act of God by the Spirit (Jn 6:65; Acts 16:14). Only the Holy Spirit can create new life, not the preached word, which only has a moral impact. God uses the word in convicting men of their sin and need of a saviour (Rm 10:17; 1 Pt 1:23) but speaks a creative word in men's soul to give them a new heart and a new spirit (2 Cor 4:6). Regeneration occurs in the sub-conscious, but the truth expressed in preaching addresses man's consciousness. The truth of the word has no impact upon sinners unless the Holy Spirit does a work in them first.

James 1:18 does not prove mediate regeneration but affirms that we are actually birthed by the will of God, and the Word is used by God in this process. Many commentators make theologically woolly statements on this verse, accidentally implying mediate regeneration. It is true that preaching the truth is the means of bringing God's word to our attention, to making a moral impact, and the Spirit uses this to convict us of sin. However, the act of regeneration is a direct creative act upon the soul to bring a new nature which has not previously existed. Only when regeneration has occurred can we see Christ, believe and repent. Therefore, the 'Word' [*logos*] here most likely refers to the Second Person of the Trinity and Jm 1:21 confirms this [*'receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls'* (where James exhorts believers to progressive sanctification)].

There is a close connection between the word as truth and the Spirit using that word and then regenerating a person. We must remember that the truth is Christ (Jn 14:6) and that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God (Eph 6:17). Peter's statement about the Word bringing regeneration (1 Pt 1:23) does not refer to human preaching but to Christ as the Word (verse 25 does not imply preaching generally but to the Word preached). There is a difference between preaching the word and Christ as the Word. The Spirit's function is to bring the things of Christ to men and regeneration is an act of both. The seed of

regeneration, the principle of new life, is implanted by the Spirit in the heart, which brings regeneration.

Immediate regeneration is, historically, the teaching of the Reformed affirming that regeneration is an efficacious work of God alone, wrought without man's involvement, knowledge or will.

Mediate Imputation

This matter can be difficult to understand and has been obscured by jargon in dogmatics. Though a complex matter, it is of crucial importance in Christian doctrine; please try to follow me here as I try to unwrap it.

'Mediate Imputation' is a theory developed to explain the connection of Adam's sin to the human race. The Biblical view is that of imputation and generation. Adam was the representative of the human race and the most perfect man until the incarnation of the Son. Adam corporately stood for all of us and was more able than any human being today, being perfect in mind and body. His fall was the fall of all men, who are organically united to him and who are accountable in him. We are corrupt before God because we have indwelling sin inherited by generation from Adam but we are also guilty before God because Adam stood as the federal (covenant) head of the human race which was tested in him. Thus Adam's sin is imputed (accounted) to all that came afterwards (i.e. 'immediate, or direct, imputation').

Reformed theories

Realistic Theory

There has been debate about this matter in Calvinistic circles for centuries. Historically it was believed that the 'Realistic Theory' explained the matter and this view was held by many pre-Reformation theologians, and also latterly by WGT Shedd and James Thornwell. It is not without its value but it ultimately breaks down.

It is the idea that human nature is a single unit. In Adam the whole human nature was corrupted in Adam's fall. Individual men are manifestations of the same substance as Adam, and are thus corrupt. Human nature was corrupted and guilty in Adam; thus all men sinned in Adam. But there are problems with this theory:

- a) It makes the soul to appear as a material substance.
- b) Every individual is conscious of a separate personality and not just part of a universal consciousness.
- c) It does not explain how later generations are responsible for Adam's first sin but not for his later sins (or even the sins of the generations after Adam).
- d) It does not explain why Christ was not responsible for Adam's sin since he had a human nature.
- e) It ruins the parallel in Rm 5 between Adam and Christ. Christians are not righteous because they actually do righteous things in Christ, they are considered righteous because Christ's righteousness is legally imputed to them.

The key to Adam's sin is that he stood as a legal representative for all men, as Christ stood as covenant head for all the elect. Thus the Realistic Theory is insufficient.

The Covenant of works (part of Federal or Covenant theology)

Other Reformed folk, from the Reformation onwards, developed the concept of the 'Covenant of Works' whereby Adam stood as the covenant head of all men as well as the

natural father. As covenant or federal head he represented all men. The concept also includes the ideas of probation followed by reward or punishment, but represents this in the form of a contract. Since this suggests that there was the possibility of eternal life without Christ, some Reformed folk (including this writer) have objected to the doctrine. Louis Berkhof writes, '*According to the terms of the covenant Adam would obtain a rightful claim to eternal life, if he fulfilled the conditions of the covenant*' (*Systematic Theol.* p242). Such a claim is unbiblical and absurd. There was never a component in God's plan of a possible salvation by human merit without Christ. The emphasis on Adam as a representative head is accurate, but the system described in the Covenant of Works is not.

A combination

Many historic Reformed folk taught a combination of the two systems above: thus the sin of Adam is imputed to the race because of our real participation in him and because of our representation in him as our covenant head. We are corrupt by nature and organic unity but also guilty by imputation. Many Puritans accepted this view (see AH Strong, *Syst. Theol.* 2:613).

The Reformers did not develop an articulated theory of immediate imputation but did affirm that Adam was the representative of all men and that indwelling sin ensures guilt. Men are corrupt because Adam was corrupted. Calvin did teach that as well as being born with a corrupt nature, all men are sinful due to the imputed guilt of Adam's sin and their own pollution. The development of federal theology occurred later, from Henry Bullinger onwards, and was not complete for 100 years after Calvin until the time of Witsius. It was this development that brought the idea of Adam as federal representative to the foreground and clearly distinguished the transmission of guilt and corruption. Federal theology accepted human pollution but emphasised guilt by immediate imputation, worked out in the Covenant of Works.

An assessment

The facts of Adam standing as man's representative are clearly laid out in scripture without having to construct the idea of a contract with rewards for human merit without Christ. Thus the idea of a covenant of works is to be rejected as it is never mentioned in scripture, but the concept of the imputation of Adam's sin to all future generations is clearly Biblical. Paul develops this in detail in Romans 4-5. God imputes the guilt of Adam's first sin in the probation of man's federal head to all those related to him in the same way that Christ remits the sins of all those who are federally related to him by new life.

Therefore, as through one man's offence *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift* came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. Rm 5:18-19

The work (obedience) of Christ secured eternal life for us just as Adam's disobedience secured guilt for mankind.

Thus it is certain that Adam was not only the progenitor, but as it were the root of mankind, and therefore all the race was necessarily vitiated in his corruption. (John Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. I, p271.)

Rejection of imputation

Arminians, Pelagians and Socinians reject any idea of the imputation of Adam's sin and guilt; as do Liberals, Emil Brunner and Karl Barth more recently. They insist that there is no connection between our state and Adam's fall; at worst he set a bad example. Semi-

Pelagians and early Arminians teach that man inherited a natural inability from Adam but are not responsible for this and are thus not guilty for it; however, Wesleyan Arminians ('Evangelical Arminianism') accept that man's inherent corruption includes guilt.

Mediate imputation

Joshua Placaeus, professor of theology at Saumur, proposed the idea of mediate imputation to seek mediation between Arminians, Socinians and the Reformed in 1645. He denied immediate imputation and taught that we are merely guilty because we have a sinful nature inherited from Adam. Men only become guilty because they are corrupt; their legal status derives from their corrupt condition, not the other way round. Only actual breaches of the law bring guilt. This error became popular in later theological systems, such as that of New Divinity and New Haven Theology in New England and also Samuel Hopkins. It is false because:

- a) The depravity in men appears when they are born and is already inherent due to Adam's sin; it does not simply appear later when they sin.
- b) There is no accounting for the legal transmission of Adam's guilt and depravity to his descendants.
- c) The theory naturally implies that there is a generational accumulation of sin; that there is the mediate imputation of the sins of previous generations to those following.
- d) Moral corruption requires guilt; this theory presumes that there is moral corruption without punishment.
- e) It teaches the logical absurdity that human depravity (as the result of Adam's sin) can be counted as the legal basis for imputing the guilt of that sin.
- f) It denies scripture (see later).

The Biblical position summarised

The Bible clearly explains that man is both guilty and corrupt in Adam from birth. This means that guilt has been imputed (accounted) as well as corruption generated naturally. All men are children of wrath, worthy of condemnation. They are born guilty as well as corrupt. They do not become guilty by sinning; they are already guilty since they are the same flesh as Adam, guilty flesh.

Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? *Then* may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil. Jer 13:23

Who can bring a clean *thing* out of an unclean? No one! Job 14:4

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. Ps 51:5 ['Iniquity' here can mean both depravity and guilt.]

The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. Ps 58:3

What *is* man, that he could be pure? And *he who is* born of a woman, that he could be righteous? ... How much less man, *who is* abominable and filthy, who drinks iniquity like water! Job 15:14, 16

Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men. Rm 5:12

... among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. Eph 2:3 [That is, by nature we are guilty.]

That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Jn 3:6

He who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. Jn 3:36

Romans 5:12-19 demonstrates that there is a solidarity between Adam and all the human race, so that the sin of the first man became the sin of all by immediate imputation. The sin of the first man is reckoned by God to be the sin of all. Our true conscience agrees with this; if we were all given the same probation as Adam, we would have all sinned in the same way. Adam was tested for mankind as their representative, and we all sinned in him. In addition, the corruption we inherit by natural generation from Adam means that we are also actually depraved and commit sin. All men are both guilty in Adam and naturally corrupt. For this reason we are born guilty and sin immediately. For this reason, all men die.

Summary: the Bible teaches immediate imputation regarding the transmission of Adam's sin to the race as a federal representative. That is, God sovereignly imputed Adam's sin and guilt directly to his descendants due to the solidarity of the human race, which was tested in Adam. All men are born both guilty and corrupt. Rejection of immediate imputation (e.g. Arminianism) and positing mediate imputation (Saumur or New Haven) are errors.

Addenda: Governmental Theory of the atonement [or Moral Government]

This was a proposal to provide a middle way between Reformed and Socinian teaching on the atonement and the foundation for this idea was laid by the hypothetical universalism in Amyraldism.

In his book, 'The Plan of Salvation', BB Warfield explains that variations in theological systems are often founded on variations in the order of decrees. There is value in reproducing his lists for the three supposed Calvinistic positions.

Particularistic		
Consistently Particularistic		Inconsistently Particularistic
Supralapsarian	Infralapsarian	Amyraldian
Election of some to eternal life with God.	Permission of Fall – guilt, corruption and total inability.	Permission of Fall – guilt, corruption and total inability.
Permission of Fall – guilt, corruption and total inability.	Election of some to life in Christ.	Gift of Christ to render salvation possible to all.
Gift of Christ to redeem the elect.	Gift of Christ to redeem the elect.	Election of some for gift of moral ability.
Gift of the Holy Spirit to save the redeemed.	Gift of the Holy Spirit to save the redeemed.	Gift of Holy Spirit to work moral ability in the elect.
Sanctification of all the redeemed and regenerated.	Sanctification of all the redeemed and regenerated.	Sanctification by the Spirit.

The Plan of Salvation, Eerdmans, (1942) p31.

The only difference between infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism is the reversal of the first two decrees. Infralapsarianism has the decree of election after (or below, *infra*) the Fall, supralapsarianism before (or above, *supra*) it. Traditionally most Calvinists have been infralapsarian, seeking to avoid the idea of a God who created man to fall, emphasising that he rescued man as fallen. But clearly the Biblical position, and the most honouring to God, is the supralapsarian position, which reveals God as fully sovereign, totally in control, securing the desired end from the beginning and working to a clearly defined plan. However, that is an argument for another day; both positions are acceptable.

The Amyraldian position can be seen to be very different from traditional Calvinism, though it claimed to be Reformed. The gift of Christ to all, or universal atonement, is not limited to the elect but is for everyone and appears immediately after the decree to permit the Fall. After this provision is made for the elect to believe. As we have said before, this strips the cross of any saving value since its benefits are for everyone, and not everyone gets saved. The logical outcome of this is the Governmental Theory, a concept that denies redemption at all.

It was the proposal of Dutch jurist and statesman, Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) who had been a student of Arminius. He was a humanist who sought to moderate dogmatic assumptions and enable conciliation between opposing Protestant groups.² The enemy of compromise is

² Particularly Socinians. **Socinian atonement** was universal. It teaches that there is no divine retributive justice at all, therefore sin does not need to be punished. God can pardon people without satisfaction. The cross did not atone for sin, nor did it move God to pardon sin. Christ saves men by showing an example of

always dogmatic claims of truth, which humanists cannot stand and all those who, like Grotius, seek to build a single Christian global church will fall into one compromise after another until there is no dogmatic truth left to stand upon.

With no Biblical basis whatsoever (but influenced by Peter Abelard [1079-1142]), Grotius taught that God is free to relax the law that sin results in death, yet without subverting his position as upholder of justice and as the Moral Governor of the universe. God supposedly did this by sending Christ to suffer on the cross only as an example of divine justice, showing his displeasure against sin, not as a penal substitute. Christ did not die as a substitute for man's sin, did not suffer God's wrath for sin, but suffered as a perfect example of a man who honoured the law. This death is then inexplicably accepted by God to satisfy the law that sin demands death; Christ's death being accepted instead of man's death. As a result of the cross, God relaxed the rule that men should die for sin, and the cross also becomes a deterrent. The cause of the cross was God's sense of right and wrong, not the need to propitiate wrath. God's justice does not require all the demands of the law to be met; he can alter his requirements as he sees fit.

Despite its fantastic theology, this position held considerable influence for centuries, affecting New Haven theology, New Divinity, Wardlaw, RW Dale and Andrew Fuller amongst others.

The obvious comment is that it is inconceivable that anyone should seriously try to bridge Reformed doctrine and Socinianism since the latter is such a serious heretical position at many levels (see footnote). The idea is preposterous and only possible in the mind of an already deluded man. It denies much of scripture, such as: total depravity; the revelation of the cross as the righteousness of God in execution of the law against sin; the cross as a sacrifice and Christ as sin-bearer; or the threats and warnings against sin. It has no explanation as to how Old Testament saints were saved since the deterrent had not yet transpired (where was moral government in the OT?).

Grotius emphasised (like Fuller) the use of natural, moral law; i.e. law as a feature of human nature (rules governing actions) and not as a manifestation of God's perfect will. Thus the law is not a reflection of God's nature and will for man. Salvation becomes understanding what to do, and doing it after seeing the cross. The combination of Abelard's Moral Influence theory³ and Grotius' Governmental Theory is the Moral Government theology evidenced in heretics like Charles Finney (Oberlin Theology), where salvation becomes completely Pelagian.

Grotius is a classic case of someone seeking theological compromise in order to achieve a desired end that is perceived to promote peace. It fails to understand that true Christianity is dogmatic and cannot be watered down; neither does it seek global peace. Jesus promised to bring a sword and cause division because many will reject him and the truth of the

faith and obedience in his life and death. There is no real connection between the death of Christ and the salvation of sinners. However, Socinianism teaches that Christ expiated sins in the sense that, as a reward for his obedience to death, he was given power to give eternal life to believers. In other words, this is just a rehash of Pelagianism; man saves himself and there is no depravity. Socinianism also denied that Christ was God, holding to adoptionist views. Note that it cannot account for the salvation of believers before the cross or those who die in infancy.

³ **Moral Influence Theory:** In opposition to Anselm, whose view was similar to the Reformers, Abelard proposed that God does not require satisfaction for sin and Christ's death was not a propitiation or expiation. It was a revelation of God's love suffering with sinners. This did not satisfy divine justice but reveals divine love and softens the human heart to lead them to repentance. Note: a) this denies many scriptures explaining the need for just satisfaction. b) The revelation of God's love in the cross was by penal substitution. c) It denies Total Depravity or grace for repentance.

Gospel. Our job is not to enable reconciliation with heresies but to bring actual reconciliation of people to God through obedience to the truth.

To summarise the Governmental Theory:

- Denial of Penal substitution: It denies that the cross was intended to pay the penalty for sin.
- The cross is merely a moral example of obedience and a deterrent against sin. It revealed that God's law had been broken and God, as moral governor, sent Christ to suffer to show this.
- Christ's obedience enabled God to by-pass punishment of sinners as an arbitrary act of the divine will and offer salvation to all that repent. In this God's moral government is not weakened. God can relax his law by his own will.

Conclusion

The need of the hour is certainty! What the Lord's people require today is a re-discovery of absolute truth as revealed in God's word. We need a new generation of solid, doctrinal Bible teachers that will educate the churches; but first a thirst for truth is necessary in those churches, and this is sadly lacking, having been replaced by mysticism, humanism, Charismaticism, emotionalism and a desire for power in many places.

Christianity is dogmatic, as God is dogmatic. This is not a dirty word but a vital word which is used to describe theological certainties. One is either dogmatic, compromised or confused; i.e. one is either certain of specific theological doctrines, tolerant of all perverted doctrinal statements equally, or lacking in clarity about Biblical teaching. Those who lack clarity but seek the truth are disciples who will gradually learn dogma and become steadfast people; but those who yield to compromise in the name of tolerance will be fit for nothing, double minded and unstable in all their ways.

Saumur gives us a very clear and objective illustration of what happens when clever people yield to compromise in order to promote peace. The Bible shows us that we can never compromise truth and must never seek peace with heretical teachings. These must be confronted, condemned and those promoting them admonished. Appendix one demonstrates that this is a Biblical and apostolic position.

Compromise of the truth is never acceptable if we desire to obey Christ. There is no middle way between God's truth and man's ideas. Believers must be dogmatic.

Appendix One

Paul's condemnation of opposing theological positions

Paul is scathing in his repeated denunciation of those who oppose the truth. He uses every form of attack: sarcasm, irony, wit, contradiction, censure and even vehement condemnation. He was unafraid to name names or to call people 'dogs' and 'evil workers'. In parts of the pastoral letters nearly 50% of his doctrine is condemnation of error, so great is Paul's concern for the truth. It is impossible to be a genuine pastor and yet fail to warn your people about errors. Such are poor shepherds who are so worried about toleration and compromise that they care nothing that their sheep are being fed to wolves in front of their eyes. Let us note some examples:

The need of censure

Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 2 Tim 4:2

Note: 'Rebuke' can be translated, 'censure severely' or 'admonish sharply'.

... holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped.
Titus 1:9-11

Note: 'Convict' is *elegcho* meaning: to convict, refute, confute, with a suggestion of shame of the person convicted; to find fault with; to reprehend severely, chide, admonish, reprove, to call to account, or even to chasten, to punish.

Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith. Titus 1:13

Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Titus 2:15

Strong sarcastic speech

Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! ... Let us be of the same mind. Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame -- who set their mind on earthly things. Phil 3:2, 16-19

I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off! Gal 5:12 [Spoken of Jewish teachers inflicting Jewish ideas on to the Galatian churches. As these promoted circumcision (and called themselves 'the circumcision'), Paul literally says that he wished they would go the whole way and castrate themselves.]

Strong opposition to error

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of gain*. From such withdraw yourself. 1 Tim 6:3-5

For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was. 2 Tim 3:6-9

But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*. 2 Tim 3:13-14

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *theirears* away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 2 Tim 4:3-4

... holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans *are* always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work. Titus 1:9-16

Identifying heretics and opposers

Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words. 2 Tim 4:14-15

... having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. 1 Tim 1:19-20

But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. 2 Tim 2:16-18

Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words. 2 Tim 4:14-15

These snippets prove the point without endlessly quoting more verses.

Scripture quotations are from The New King James Version
© Thomas Nelson 1982

Paul Fahy Copyright © 2010
Understanding Ministries
<http://www.understanding-ministries.com>