

A Simplified History of Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism

Chiefly with regard to its development in Britain

Introduction

This, of necessity, must be a simplified work since a proper discussion of all the points featured would occupy a book of many thousands of pages. For instance, whole books can be found which document the progress of the Synod of Dort and which make fascinating reading. Many other books thoroughly detail the arguments between Augustine and Pelagius.

Consequently, we can only refer to the chief events with concise brevity so that we can comprehend the whole history better. Some sections of this work are adapted from sections of previous papers by the author.

The subject under consideration

The essential argument between Calvinism and Arminianism, or between Augustinianism and Pelagianism, centres upon the Biblical account of human responsibility in comparison with divine sovereignty; and this heavily focuses upon the doctrines of predestination, atonement and man's inability.

The relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility has occupied minds since earliest times. The fall of man, with the entrance of sin into his mind, ensured that the human intellect grappled this subject with difficulty. The damaged human intellect was less able to cope with answering this question, hence the various controversies throughout history. This led to continual fights and debates between supporters of divine sovereignty and supporters of human free will.

The extreme error in this debate is Pelagianism, which simply states that man can save himself; he has the moral power to perfectly obey God's law by following Christ's example. It champions human responsibility above divine sovereignty. Socinianism comes very close to this, but with added features, such as denying Christ's divinity and penal substitution and positing Unitarianism (denial of the Trinity). *Summary: salvation by works.*

Semi-Pelagianism is the compromised form of Pelagianism, seeking to be more Biblical but still emphasising man's ability to contribute to salvation by works. The most common forms of this today are Roman Catholicism and Arminianism. *Summary: salvation by works and grace in co-operation.*

The Biblical position, as affirmed by the Reformation, is that salvation is by grace alone, *solus gratia*.¹

¹ There are five Reformation solas summarising Biblical salvation: *Sola gratia*, grace alone; *sola fide*, faith alone; *solus Christus*, Christ alone; *sola Scriptura*, Scripture alone & *solus Deo gloria*, glory to God alone.

The debates on these issues continue to this day but often with little or no knowledge of the historical background. It seems appropriate, however, to discover the historical circumstances about this universal debate to help throw some light on the facts.

Two key principles of Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism are:

1. Adam's sin has not corrupted all men and has, therefore, not rendered them spiritually unable and guilty.²
2. Man's responsibility is measured by his ability. God does not command what men cannot do naturally. Faith is demanded, therefore all men have faith if they choose. Pelagius, '*God does not command us to do anything that we cannot do.... If I ought, then I can.*' (sic.).³

Summary: '*I can*'.

In answer to this Calvinism avers, with Scripture, that:

1. Adam's sin has corrupted all men; all men are guilty in Adam and morally unable to do good. (Rm 3:10-18; Job 15:14)
2. Responsibility is not limited by ability. God commands men to believe and repent even though they cannot do this without grace (Acts 17:30;). Faith and repentance are gifts of God to the elect alone (Eph 2:8-9; Phil 1:29; Acts 5:31, 11:18). Augustine, '*Give me what you command and command what you will.*'⁴

Summary: '*I can't but God will.*'

Once we understand the evils of the historic forms of Pelagianism we will be more able to spot, resist and reject the modern guises by which this satanic lie is placed into the churches. If Christians had properly understood historic Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism, they would never have followed John Wesley, Charles Finney, Nathaniel Taylor, Hugo Grotius, Clark Pinnock or Andrew Fuller.

The chief movements and controversies

Pre-Reformation

Judaisers & Ebionism

The earliest attack on sovereign grace alone was by the Judaizing elements in the Jewish Christian church. We see Paul being forced to combat this in the book of Galatians. Certain Jewish teachers insisted that Christians had to keep the Law of Moses legalistically. God's justification was not enough, man had to add his works righteousness to be accepted with God. Paul's response is clear:

A man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. (Gal 2:16)

Thus salvation is by grace, through faith, is in Christ alone, is based upon the word of God and is to the glory of God alone.

² Pelagius: '*God has given you a nature that enables you to choose the right. You can avoid sinning if you wish. If you sin, it is ... because of your misuse of your free-will. ... God commands nothing impossible. It is sheer profanity to say that God has laid certain duties upon us and at the same time has given us a nature incapable of performing them*'. Reginald Stewart Moxon, *The Doctrine of Sin*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1922, p50.

³ Charles R. Biggs; *Pelagianism in the Formation and the Reformation of the Christian Church Part I*. <http://www.aplacefortruth.org/essays/part1c.htm>

⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, 10:29; or '*Grant what Thou commandest, and command what Thou dost desire*'.

This error set the scene for future heresies, adding human legalistic works to faith and grace.

After the death of the apostles, this error formalised into a cult called Ebionism, which was a mixture of Essene⁵ folk from Qumran and legalistic Christians. Eventually this sect exalted the law, rejected the letters of Paul and rejected the pre-incarnate life and divinity of Christ. Note that works righteousness immediately detracts from the glory of Christ and leads to further error where the Lord is denied. This will be repeated in later history.

Summary

Jewish legalism is essentially Pelagian.

Augustine and Pelagius

The first major controversy in the church over this issue was inspired by the teachings of the British Celtic monk, Pelagius.

Pelagianism was an 5th century system of works righteousness that was developed by the Pelagius and vigorously confronted by Aurelius Augustinus of Hippo Regius in Numidia [354-430].⁶ This denied the total depravity of man, the imputation of Adam's sin to all men, election, and the need of redemption; it essentially asserted that man could achieve his own righteousness. It elevated man's free-will and claimed that man could obey the law sufficiently unto salvation, aided by Christ's example. It was the strongest teaching that contended against the sovereignty of God in salvation.

Pelagius came from Rome to Carthage in 410 with his student Celestius. Concerned by low morals he considered that Augustine's emphasis on grace contributed to lax living. Celestius, the most prominent follower of Pelagius, was condemned at the Council of Carthage in 411 because he denied the transmission of Adam's sins to his descendants. Pelagius and Celestius were both condemned at the councils of Carthage and Milevis (Numidia, North Africa) in 416 and Pope Innocent I [410- 417] excommunicated them; but their preaching continued.

Augustine condemned Pelagianism, emphasising the doctrines of grace and especially the denial of human ability to do good; his efforts were repeatedly recognised by the church. Pelagianism was condemned in 418 at the Council of Carthage, while Augustinianism was formally upheld; and the Pelagians were exiled by the Western Emperor Honorius. The council proclaimed that that grace was necessary for right living, and that sinlessness is impossible in this life. However, this did not end the debate due to the preaching of Pelagius' supporters, even after his death sometime before 420.

Therefore, the condemnation of Pelagianism was re-affirmed in many councils and synods and the former council decision ratified at the Third General Council of Ephesus in 431. Pelagianism was thereby condemned by church councils in the East and the West and was refuted by more church councils in history than any other heresy.

Pelagianism remained strong in southern Italy and Sicily, openly preached by Julian of Eclanum until his death in 455. This deposed bishop was Pelagianism's most systematic exponent, causing Augustine to write three works against him before he died in 431. It was also popular in Britain until the coming of Germanus of Auxerre, Gaul, who was invited by

⁵ A Jewish sect based upon secret doctrines, communism, rejection of animal sacrifices and asceticism. They were based in a secluded community at Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were later discovered.

⁶ Numidia was in Roman North Africa. Augustinus is better known as 'Augustine', sometimes abbreviated as 'Austin'.

British bishops to lead two missions to combat the Pelagian heresy in 429 and 447. Pelagianism had ruined the British churches but Germanus brought the truth to bear on Celtic Christians and built and strengthened churches.

Summary of Pelagianism

God's grace not needed, Man saves himself.

Chief advocates

Pelagius, Julian of Eclanum, Celestius.

Semi-Pelagianism

After the Pelagian controversy, Semi-Pelagianism arose seeking to reconcile Augustinianism with Pelagianism. Adherents rejected the heresy of Pelagius but also balked at the harsh rigidity of Augustine's determinism. So, they rejected Augustine's doctrines of predestination and irresistible grace to affirm human responsibility, or man's free-will.⁷

Key influences in this amorphous movement were the ascetic monastic, John of Cassian [d. 433] and Faustus, bishop of Riez [d. 490]. John Cassian said that the beginning of doing good is man's doing (like Pelagianism), but grace takes over immediately afterwards (contra Pelagius). Man is not dead in sin but merely sick. God does not choose the elect in eternity but merely foresees who would believe in the future. Men can resist God's Spirit. Augustine responded in the works, *On the Predestination of the Saints* and *The Gift of Perseverance*. Prosper of Aquitaine continued Augustine's fight after his death. However, Semi-Pelagianism flourished in Southern France (Gaul) with Faustus of Riez; but in 523 his views were denounced as heretical at Constantinople and at Rome.

This set the foundation for many future compromises on free grace. It taught that man, though fallen, was not spiritually dead and has some power to do good but needs grace as well, found through the Bible. General grace allows for the possibility of being saved; inner grace is given to the man who has already decided to do good. Grace perfects what man starts. Man's will co-operates with the Spirit in regeneration and initiates it by free will. Man's decision is supreme and election is denied. This synergistic system⁸ (the basis of Arminianism) forms the essence of all future synergistic errors, as we shall see. All such systems deny election, total depravity, limited atonement and justification by faith alone.

Summary of Semi-Pelagianism

Synergistic regarding salvation.

Chief advocates

John of Cassian and Faustus, bishop of Riez.

Issues at stake

Is man dead in sins or not? Does God regenerate and give faith or does faith come before regeneration? Does God predestine men to salvation or does he foresee that some men believe? Is grace general (common) to all or particular to the elect? Is God sovereign in salvation or does he need man?

⁷ Semi-Pelagianism: doctrines upheld in the fifth century by a group of theologians who, while not denying the necessity of grace for salvation, maintained that the first steps towards the Christian life were ordinarily taken by the human will and God's grace supervened later. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*.

⁸ Synergism [from the Greek *syn* – 'together' and *ergon* – 'work', hence 'combined work or action'] is the idea that the human will co-operates with God in salvation; as opposed to monergism, [from the Greek *monos* – 'one' or 'single and *ergon* – 'work, hence 'single work or action'] the Biblical belief that God alone is the efficient cause of salvation, the human will cannot contribute; God is sovereign.

Semi-Augustinianism

This was a reaction in the Pelagian controversy against Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism, which it condemned, in 5th century Gaul (France). It was mainly established by Caesarius the bishop of Arles [470-543]. It proposed a moderated Augustinianism at the Second Council of Orange [529], which became the foundation of Roman Catholic views on the atonement for the Middle Ages. Main teaching: Grace comes to all enabling man to choose God and perform good works necessary for salvation. It also teaches: the denial of reprobation and affirmation of baptismal regeneration.⁹ Essentially it teaches that an unbiblical prevenient grace (working in the church sacraments) enables men to exercise free-will to then co-operate with God in salvation by good works, rather than the Semi-Pelagian view that free-will initiates grace. It denies irresistible grace and the particular decree of redemption.

The Synod of Orange ended the Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian controversy as far as the church was formally concerned but variations of Pelagianism continued. Semi-Augustinianism flourished in places after the Council of Orange because the Synod failed to affirm Augustine's teaching on predestination and irresistible grace. This set the tone for medieval Romanism, which allowed for Semi-Pelagianism to continue.

Summary of Semi-Augustinianism

Synergistic regarding salvation.

Issues at stake

Particular (absolute) predestination; irresistible grace; absolute sovereignty of God.

Chief advocate

Caesarius the bishop of Arles; Avitus, archbishop of Vienne; Gregory the Great, the biggest influence on medieval religion. Thus the Roman church became Semi-Pelagian.

Chief advocates of strict Augustinianism

Isidore of Seville [c. 560-636], Bede [c. 673-735], Alcuin [d. 804], Gottschalk [c. 804-869] and much later the proto-Reformers, Gregory of Rimini [d. 1358], John de Wycliffe [c. 1329-1384] and Jan Hus [1373-1415], followed by Martin Luther [1483-1546].

Gottschalk (Gotteschalk, Godescalus) [805-869]

The next major controversy revolved around the monk of Orbais named Gottschalk in the mid-9th century. He championed the doctrines of Augustine which, though enshrined in the Roman Church, had fallen in favour in reality.

Through Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings he became the leader of an early medieval neo-Augustinian movement. He taught in Italy and the Balkans but his doctrine of double predestination generated opposition. In 849 Gottschalk returned to Germany where he was sent by abbot Rabanus Maurus to a monastery at Hautviller, run by Archbishop Hincmar of Reims, to shut him up. From the monastery Gottschalk continued to read and write, entering into a fierce controversy, splitting the church.

Hincmar called a Synod in 849 to force Gottschalk to recant but he steadfastly refused. The Synod condemned him and adopted heresies, such as conditional reprobation, universal atonement, and a desire of God to save all men. Gottschalk was deposed from the

⁹ The separation of Semi-Pelagianism and Semi-Augustinianism is a historical fact as evidenced in Roman Catholic monastic squabbles, but the doctrinal tenets are somewhat confused and interlocking. Both are Semi-Pelagian but the latter is more moderate.

priesthood, his books burned; he was shut up in a monastery, and publicly whipped and later tortured.

Gottschalk centred primarily on predestination highlighting the Augustinian doctrine, which stated that God's gracious influence was limited to the elect. Gottschalk also limited the atonement itself, which was restricted to the elect in the sovereign purpose of God.

According to him, predestination was twofold, comprehending the punishment of the reprobate as well as the salvation of the elect; but while he held the predestination of men to the punishment of their sin, he was far from holding, as his opponents alleged, that they were predestinated to the commission of sin.¹⁰

For holding this view Gottschalk was relentlessly persecuted and imprisoned, where he died miserably after twenty years of imprisonment.¹¹

What this demonstrates is that although the official, historic position of the Roman Church was Augustinian, in reality it was hardened Semi-Pelagianism, sanctioned by councils.

Summary

Gottschalk was a proto-Calvinist.

[Note: **Did Augustine teach double predestination?** Some contest this. Augustine taught that from eternity God predestined those whom He would save and those whom He would not; he did not emphasise what is termed 'double-predestination' but did teach it. '*That is, he has been irrevocably destined to the judgment of eternal fire.*' Augustine on *John*, tract. 95. '*Therefore the mercy is past finding out by which He has mercy on whom He will, no merits of his own preceding; and the truth is unsearchable by which He hardeneth whom He will, even although his merits may have preceded, but merits for the most part common to him with the man on whom He has mercy. As of two twins, of which one is taken and the other left, the end is unequal, while the deserts are common, yet in these the one is in such wise delivered by God's great goodness, that the other is condemned by no injustice of God's. For is there unrighteousness with God? Away with the thought.*' *Treatise on the Predestination of the Saints*, Book II, the Ante-Nicene Fathers, chapter 25. '*It is, therefore, in the power of the wicked to sin; but that in sinning they should do this or that by that wickedness is not in their power, but in God's, who divides the darkness and regulates it; so that hence even what they do contrary to God's will is not fulfilled except it be God's will.*' *Treatise on the Predestination of the Saints*, the Ante-Nicene Fathers, Book I, chapter 33. '*The wills of men are so much in the power of God, that he can turn them whithersoever it pleases him. ... Who can help trembling at those judgments of God by which He does in the hearts of even wicked men whatsoever He wills, at the same time rendering to them according to their deeds?*' *Treatise on Grace & Free Will*, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Chapter 41]

Peter Abelard [1079-1142]

Abelard is responsible for the Moral Influence Theory of Atonement. He was a scholastic philosopher and theologian who led an event-filled life that has been dramatised. Though brilliant he was in error about the Trinity and was hounded, settling in an obscure monastery in Brittany. However the conditions were so harsh that he returned to Paris where he once again became a popular lecturer. Assailed again by Bernard of Clairvaux, he was condemned by the Council of Sens and died on his way to Rome to appeal his case.

He left many works on logic and theology and among his followers were future popes and cardinals. In the 19th century he was hailed as the precursor of modern free-thinking, but

¹⁰ John Owen, *Works* Vol. 10, A Display of Arminianism, Prefatory note by John White, p13-14. AGES Software edition (2000). Chunks of this paper are indebted to this note.

¹¹ Note that double predestination had appeared before. Fulgentius bishop of Ruspe [468-533], in the name of the sixty African bishops banished by the Vandals and then living in Sardinia, wrote *De veritate praedestinationis et gratiae Dei*, against Faustus. He used the expression 'praedestinatio duplex', but understands by the second predestination to be the predestination to damnation, not to sin, and censures those who affirmed a predestination to sin.

he was really just another theologian who sought to rationalise faith by reason, but adopting new methods.

His Moral Influence Theory of the atonement states that the atonement has an effect on man because of what Christ did. When men contemplate the love of God in the death of Jesus we are moved to repent and love him back. Thus salvation becomes a work of man.

In reality this theory denies that there is any atonement at all, claiming that God does not require satisfaction for sin (as taught by Anselm, 1033-1109). Thus the death of Christ does not satisfy divine justice nor is it expiation for sin; it is just a manifestation of God's love. God wants to save everyone and just requires them to be penitent. This is a denial of the Biblical idea of atonement presented throughout Scripture, which is always connected to a propitiating sacrifice.

This is essentially Pelagian and went on to influence further errors on the atonement in later history (notably Governmental Theory). It is a significant diversion from Anselm's theory that the atonement is satisfaction for sin (which is similar to Protestantism's idea of penal substitution).

Summary

A Pelagian, false system of atonement.

Medieval period

In the late medieval era the scholastic theologians began to modify and deviate from Augustine's views on man's will and predestination.

Thomists¹² and Scotists¹³ had discussed the problem metaphysically under a cloud of scholastic subtleties. But even these had been influenced by Augustinianism, despite heavily centring on unbiblical rationalism and Aristotelian philosophical speculation.

Among the schools of thought which deviated the most were the Scotus and Occamist.¹⁴

There was a tendency to tone down Augustine's doctrine of absolute predestination by emphasizing God's foreknowledge and to make the most of his idea of freedom of choice. For the scholastic theologians, even those of them, like Scotus and Occam and his followers, who diverged farthest from Augustine's doctrine of salvation, professed to follow him before all other fathers as their master, and held the teaching of Pelagius to be heresy. Nevertheless, there is in the scholastic theologians, even the least divergent from Augustine, an element that does not entirely accord with his teaching on grace and free will, and this element becomes more marked in that of the later schoolmen.¹⁵

In general, the Romanist position was formally unchanged but on the ground there were a variety of opinions held on the matter. For the average church-goer, the Roman system was Semi-Pelagian, or worse, mere superstition. In some cases (such as Tetzels selling of

¹² Followers of Thomas Aquinas [1224-1274], founder of Roman Catholic scholasticism. The greatest philosopher and theologian of the medieval church. The *Summa Theologica* was a framework of Christian theology based on Aristotelian principles. It emphasised reason in knowing God.

¹³ Followers of Duns Scotus. Scotism is the name given to the philosophical and theological system named after 'Blessed' John Duns Scotus. He confronted Aquinas on several points. Thomism and Scotism both derived from Arabic Neoplatonised Aristotelianism, but Thomism is closer to the orthodox Aristotelianism of Maimonides, Averroes and Avicenna, while Scotism reflects the Platonising tendency going back through Avicenna, the Brethren of Purity, the Liber de Causis and Proclus to Plotinus. Scotism developed the idea of the Immaculate Conception.

¹⁴ Followers of William of Ockham [1280-1349].

¹⁵ James Mackinnon, *Luther & the Reformation*, Russell, (1962) p65.

papal indulgences or the prayers of the saints) it was not just works salvation, but the work of someone else.

It is noteworthy that what spurred Luther on to Reformation was denying the later schoolmen (scholastics) and holding on to his order's strict Augustinianism which he graciously received from his mentor Johann Staupitz.

Summary

Synergism prevails in practice but Augustine assented to academically. Semi-Pelagianism is both taught and practised.

Romanism

Perhaps the key error taught by Rome was the corruption of justification. Rome denied (and still denies) justification by faith alone. Romanism is essentially a Semi-Pelagian religion, based on works righteousness. It teaches the necessity of the works-righteousness of the sinner and also of the church leadership officiating various supposed means of grace.

Rome can make statements that at first sight seem Biblical, such as, justification is by faith 'on account of the merits of Jesus Christ only'. But 'faith' here does not mean reliance upon Christ alone. Roman Catholics understand this to mean the Spirit's influence in believers that produces righteousness in them, so that they begin to fulfil the law (as in Semi-Pelagianism or Semi-Augustinianism). It is a gradual progression of works righteousness. Rome also teaches that justification can be received in baptism and can be lost. The Council of Trent stated clearly that it depends, at least in part, upon human merit. Trent confused justification with sanctification (C. 16. Canon 24), thus stating that it is a gradual process. [This is another common error, e.g. seen in many early Anabaptist groups.] Roman Catholicism is based upon human merit in salvation, both in its initiation and continuation. Roman justification is not by grace-given faith alone.

We should also note another characteristic of false teaching here. Heresies often take Biblical words and frame propositions that appear at first sight to be Biblically sound. Words are used that have a scriptural and theological meaning, but are defined differently, so that to the false teacher the meaning of the doctrine is different. For instance, 'faith' for Roman Catholics does not mean the same as 'faith' in the scripture.¹⁶ This is a deceitful technique used to fool adherents and defend from external attacks. Defending the faith calls for careful analysis, application, trust in God and wisdom.

Summary of Romanism

A synergistic, Semi-Pelagian system based upon human works in co-operation with an unbiblical grace received through the church sacraments.

The Reformation period

Anabaptists

This was a very diverse grouping with at least four main types being noticeable, only one that can claim to be truly evangelical; though some Reformed historians even deny this saying that they were all heretical.

¹⁶ The Baptist Andrew Fuller used this technique of constantly and arbitrarily redefining words to such a degree that it is exceedingly difficult to penetrate his meandering thinking and many readers are fooled to believe his false propositions.

Certainly many important Anabaptists rejected the doctrine of unconditional election (e.g. Michael Sattler). Others denied total depravity and taught free-willism (such as Balthasar Hubmaier). Many denied justification by faith alone. At least one Anabaptist confession was synergistic in composition and denied original sin. The *Waterland Confession* denounced unconditional election and reprobation in article 7, while it affirmed conditional election based upon human faith and endurance in articles 47-48. Often the way of salvation was by 'walking the way Christ walked' including personal suffering; this personal suffering had redemptive value (e.g. Hans Hut, Hubmaier). Leonard Schiemer stated, '*Without my suffering God cannot save me in spite of all his power*'.¹⁷ They also affirmed the falling away of the saints (Hans Denck, Hubmaier). All this is similar to the Romanism of Trent.

Summary

The overriding emphasis of Anabaptism was Pelagian.

Michael Servetus [Miguel Serveto Conesa, 1511-1553]

Servetus was a humanist polymath who first accurately described pulmonary blood circulation. He was a theologian, physician, cartographer, familiar with mathematics, astronomy, meteorology, geography, human anatomy, medicine and pharmacology, jurisprudence, translation and poetry.

Servetus is famous for being burned at the stake for heresy in Geneva, for which many foolish people blame Calvin personally. In fact Calvin did everything he could to help him from the decision of the Genevan magistrates and the condemnation of the King of France.

Some place Servetus with the rational wing of the Anabaptists. What is certain is that he taught many serious errors, such as denial of the Trinity, when this was punishable by death in all European states, Catholic and Protestant.

Servetus denied the eternal existence of the Son and substitutionary atonement and taught a mystical, Neo-Platonic pantheism. He denied original sin and Biblical salvation, teaching that men have freedom and therefore salvation is by individual free-will. Men become progressively divine after gradually overcoming sin by effort.

Summary

Servetus was Pelagian.

Post Reformation

After the Reformation opened up widespread doctrinal speculation, restricted by Rome earlier, the argument about sovereignty and responsibility also raged within Romanism, as well as between Rome and Geneva.

Socinianism

This is the heretical teachings of, chiefly, Faustus Socinus [Fausto Sozzini, 1539-1604], his uncle Laelius Socinus and others. Socinianism denied that Christ was God, holding to adoptionist views; it denied the Trinity and taught that Christ was just a man who became God's viceroy after his sinless life and resurrection. Indeed, until the late 19th century 'Socinianism' was the common term for Unitarianism.

¹⁷ Cairns, *Dict. of Theol. Terms*, p20.

He denied the atonement as penal substitution, or propitiation, teaching a form of governmental theory (see later) - Christ's death was merely an example of faith and obedience (the 'Example Theory'). There is no punishment for sin; men repent from their own power.

He denied the person of the Holy Spirit, predestination, original sin, total depravity and hell. He also denied God's sovereignty, making God subject to the free decisions of men, insisting that he neither foreordains nor foreknows anything. In a way, he was the first liberal theologian.

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 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. Note that it cannot account for the salvation of believers before the cross or those who die in infancy.

Summary

Pelagian in salvation.

Precursors of Arminianism

Poland and The Netherlands

The divinity of Christ, the nature of the atonement, and the corruption of human nature, are all essentially connected. Denial of the corruption of human nature (original sin) is crucial to unitarian systems, and is thus common ground between Pelagianism and Socinianism. This unity leads to similarities regarding man's ability. It is also interesting that many Arminians in history ended up as Socinians or Unitarians.

Spanheim¹⁸ ascribes the origin of the Arminian controversy in Holland to Socinians sent from Poland to spread their heresy; particularly Ostorodius and Voidovius.¹⁹ The Socinian ideas regarding the Trinity and atonement did not succeed but other opinions of Socinus did, notably on predestination, free-will and the ground of justification.

Controversy within Romanism: Molinists and Jansenists

The Jesuits always had Pelagian leanings, and in the Council of Trent [1545-63] their influence triumphed over the waning Augustinianism.

In 1588 Louis Molina²⁰ sought to unite the conflicting theories in his *Concord of Grace and Free-will*. This was partly a deviation from Augustinianism and partly a compromise of it, which resulted in a conflict with the Jesuits (free-willers), and the Jansenists (Augustinians). He sought to unite free-will and predestination by means of his 'scientia media' (middle knowledge). In this, God, through his power of knowing future contingent events (uncertain, chance events), foresees how we shall employ our free-will and treat his grace, and upon this foreknowledge he can base his predestinating decrees. In other words,

¹⁸ Friedrich Spanheim, the elder, [1600-1649] was a Reformed theology professor at the University of Leyden.

¹⁹ *Elenchus Controversiarum*, p. 237.

²⁰ Luis de Molina [1535-1600] was a Spanish Jesuit priest and scholastic defender of 'human liberty' in the divine grace and human liberty controversy (Molinism).

God predestines men based upon what he knows they will do; it thus affirms human freedom.

These doctrines opposed both traditional understanding of Augustinianism and Thomism concerning free-will and efficacious grace, and the teachings of Martin Luther and John Calvin. It was also confronted by Jansen,²¹ Pascal²² and Arnauld.²³ In time, the papal bull²⁴ *Unigenitus* ensured a triumph for the Jesuits. This also condemned Augustinianism, which had come to prominence in the writings of Jansen²⁵ and the reform movement that followed him.

Summary

So, through this controversy, Roman Catholicism formally declared itself to be Semi-Pelagian and abandoned its earlier Augustinianism by a papal bull; but in practice most people had long been Semi-Pelagian. Trent would later confirm this.

Arminianism

The chief cause of theological controversy regarding sovereignty versus responsibility lies in the Arminianism that developed in the Netherlands. This is initially centred in Jakob Arminius [1560-1609], who was influenced by Molina's Middle Knowledge and by Romanists, but it further developed in his followers called the 'Remonstrants'.

Arminius sought to make a type of Semi-Pelagian compromise in salvation based upon man's free-will. Man's will was once hindered, but God restored to all men adequate freedom (free-will) so that they can determine their own destiny. The first move of man towards God is man's own decision, God then acts subsequent to that decision. Man initiates his own salvation, thus man is sovereign in salvation. This obviously denies all those Scriptures which state that the first act of salvation is God drawing men to Christ (e.g. Jn 6:44). Note that Billy Graham's magazine was called 'Decision' to emphasise its Arminian basis.

The repercussions of this, theologically and practically, are huge. Man can have no assurance if his salvation rests upon his works instead of God, for instance. It promotes legalism. It denies God's election, calling and preservation of the saints. It denies limited atonement. It denies God's sovereignty in salvation. In short, it rejects the absolute central aspects of Biblical theology.

After the death of Junius, Jakob Arminius was elected to his post at the University of Leyden in 1603. Professor Gomar had opposed this as a result of erroneous teachings held by Arminius, but he overcame this by promising to uphold the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism. Subsequently, Gomar and Arminius argued about predestination. Gomar and his party were supported by the majority of the clergy while Arminius depended upon the political support of the state; so Arminius avoided a synod debate.

²¹ Cornelius Otto Jansen [1585-1638], bishop of Ypres (1636). Jansen sought to reform Catholicism in the mould of Augustinianism and contended against the Jesuits and the Counter Reformation, and thus disable Protestantism.

²² Blaise Pascal [1623-1662] was the most well-known member of the Jansenists. He was a mathematical prodigy, inventor, and religious thinker. He even invented a calculator and discovered Pascal's Law of hydraulics. His posthumous notes published as *Pensées* are a classic Christian apologetic.

²³ Antoine Arnauld became the leader of the Jansenists after the death of Jansen and Duvergier, abbot of Saint-Cyran in 1643.

²⁴ A papal edict; from the Latin *bullā* 'bubble, rounded object' (in medieval Latin a 'seal or sealed document').

²⁵ Jansen; *Augustinus of the Doctrine of St. Augustine*. This was condemned by the Sorbonne in 1649 and by Pope Innocent X in 1653. Jansen taught the essential basis of Calvinism.

Then Arminius died and Episcopius became the leader of the Remonstrants, as the Arminian party was now called. He submitted a remonstrance ('protest') of five articles in 1610 to the States of Holland and West Friesland. Uytenbogaert led the drawing up of these points:

1. The decree of predestination is not absolute but conditional on man's foreseen response. (Conditional election.)
2. The offer of salvation is directed to all men. (Universal atonement.)
3. Depravity. The original position was the same as Evangelical Arminianism (Wesleyanism); i.e. man can do no good work and needs grace first. (The work of the Spirit in regeneration comes before faith.) However, the Remonstrants later changed this into more unbiblical levels.
4. Man can exercise his free will after receiving grace but this grace can be accepted or denied. The first move is man's. (Resistible grace.)
5. Believers can fall from grace. (Initially they were uncertain of this but affirmed it later.)

Note

Error always increases and worsens. Arminius was more moderate than his followers. In the original Remonstrance of 1610, the Remonstrants (following Arminius) stated that man was so dead in sins that he needed grace before he could do any good work. This point was closer to Semi-Augustinianism than Semi-Pelagianism and similar to Wesleyanism. However, by the time of the Synod of Dort in 1618 their errors had increased with Remonstrants like Episcopius denying the need for prevenient grace and affirming the power of sinful man to do good and denying the imputation of Adam's sin to all men. This is the common Arminian position today. Thus Dort had to affirm total depravity and condemn Remonstrant teaching on this issue.

The Remonstrants levied soldiers to support their cause, and the provinces adopted military preparations. Maurice, the head of the house of Orange seized the government of the Dutch States and in deference to Gomar and his party, he convened a general synod at Dordrecht (Dort) on the 13th November 1618.

Representatives from many national Reformed churches attended as witnesses and advisors after a request from the Dutch Church; from England, Scotland, Germany, Switzerland and France. The French Calvinists were forbidden to attend by Louis XIII. Delegates from the Continent numbered thirty-nine pastors and eighteen ruling elders from the Belgic churches, five Professors from the universities of Holland and nineteen Presbyterians from non-Dutch churches.

Four English deputies were sent by the command of anti-Remonstrant James VI. When James received his invitation he delegated Archbishop Abbot, a firm believer in the doctrines of grace, to select representatives; he chose five of the leading Reformed scholars in England and Scotland: George Carleton [Bishop of Landaff], Joseph Hall [Dean of Worcester], John Davenant [Cambridge Professor, later Bishop of Salisbury], and Samuel Ward [Master of Sydney College, Cambridge]. The representative for the Church of Scotland was Gualter (Walter) Balcanqual [Fellow of Pembroke College]. Hall became ill during the Synod and was replaced by Abbot's chaplain, Thomas Goad. The English representatives were seen as very important advisors and arbiters and were paid a higher sum, which they shared with the others by providing free meals. Davenant was instructed to draw up the rules of debate and frequently intervened to keep the peace when tempers were roused.

This was a fiery debate at which the Remonstrants became famous for bad behaviour. Episcopius denounced the synod as unqualified and unrepresentative and refused to co-

operate. Eventually the doctrines of Arminius were condemned, and five articles were drawn up and published as the judgment of the synod to answer the five points of the Remonstrants. Remonstrant leaders were ousted from their pulpits.

These Calvinistic points were:

1. Election by unconditional grace in opposition to election on the ground of foreseen faith (works).
2. God is declared to have willed that Christ should *efficaciously* redeem all those, and those only, who from eternity were chosen to salvation and no one else.
3. Man is spiritually unable and depraved by sin.
4. The Holy Spirit works irresistibly upon the elect.
5. The perseverance of the saints to the end.

They are commonly known by the acronym TULIP (Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, Perseverance).

The Reformed churches in Europe quickly accepted the Canons of Dort and embodied the principles in their confessions.

The later Remonstrants

The tendency of Arminianism is to rationalism, liberalism and Socinianism over time. Episcopius became more liberal when he taught at a seminary in Amsterdam after 1630. During the 1700s the Remonstrants lost members to Socinianism and Deism after denying inspiration and the Trinity.

Grotius

Hugo Grotius [Huigh de Groot, 1583-1645] was a famous child prodigy, of great learning, and the founder of international justice. He was a Remonstrant student of Arminius and a Dutch humanistic jurist who sought to unite the divided parties of Calvinism, Socinianism and Arminianism on the basis of natural law, a law of nature derived from God's will known by reason. This autonomous law was a feature of human nature (rules governing actions) and not a manifestation of God's perfect will. Thus the law is not a reflection of God's nature and moral will for man but a sort of cosmic natural law.

He initiated a new theory of the atonement, Governmental Theory, whereby God relaxes the law that death follows sin while remaining the moral Governor of the universe. He emphasised God as ruler rather than judge. The cross becomes a penal example²⁶ (not penal substitute) by which God upholds this order while remitting sin. Christ 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 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.

This nonsensical, contradictory theory became very influential in the next 200 years. The combination of Abelard's Moral Influence theory, Socinus' Example Theory and Grotius' Governmental Theory is the Moral Government theology evidenced in heretics like Charles Finney, where salvation becomes completely Pelagian.

An example of modern Arminianism utilising the Government Theory is as follows:

²⁶ This idea of the cross being a moral example had appeared earlier in history; i.e. Abelard's Moral Influence theory and Socinus' Example Theory.

Arminians teach that what Christ did he did for every person; therefore, what he did could not have been to pay the penalty for sin, since no one would then ever go into eternal perdition. Arminianism teaches that Christ suffered for everyone so that the Father could forgive the ones who repent and believe; his death is such that all will see that forgiveness is costly.²⁷

Of course, if Christ does not pay the penalty for sin then no one can ever be forgiven at all. Furthermore, if God just altered his law to punish sin without cause then God ceases to be immutable or just.

Summary of Grotianism

Salvation becomes understanding what to do, and doing it after seeing the cross and being moved; i.e. Pelagianism.

Arminianism invades Puritan Britain

The Anglican Church is formally based upon the 39 Articles [1536-1571], which are essentially Calvinistic (Reformed) but Calvinistic articles had appeared before then (e.g. the Lambeth Articles). The direction of the British Church was established by the Westminster Assembly, convened by Parliament in 1643, which is clearly Calvinistic and which established double predestination.

After the appointment of Archbishop Laud²⁸ in 1633 by Charles I, Arminianism developed as part of a specific seditious plan of certain Jesuits, in collusion with Laud, to return England to Romanism. Letters found in his estate after his death proved this. Arminianism was called, in these letters, a 'sovereign drug' which was more effective in turning people back to Rome than outright persecution. The Romanising policies of Charles I were part of the reasons for the Civil War with Parliament.

Vital testimony comes from the hand of Laud himself, a professed Jesuit. After his death, a letter was found in his effects which was endorsed by him and dated March 1628. The endorsement reads: '*A Jesuit letter, sent to the Rector at Bruxels, about the ensuing Parliament.*' The letter gave the Superior of the Jesuits, then resident at Brussels, an account of church affairs in England. Part of it reads: '*Father Rector ...we have many strings to our bow. We have planted that soveraigne drugge Arminianisme, which we hope will purge the Protestants from their heresie; and it flourisheth and bears fruit in due season. For the better prevention of the Puritanes, the Arminians have already locked up the Duke's [of Buckingham]²⁹ ears; and we have those of our own religion, which stand continually at the Duke's chamber, to see who goes in and out ... Our foundation is Arminianisme. ... This we second and enforce by probable arguments.*'³⁰

Arminianism came from Rome, and leads thither again.³¹
... they (the Arminians) and their fellows, the Jesuits. ³²

²⁷ J Kenneth Grider; article 'Arminianism', *Evangelical Dict. of Theology*, ed. Elwell, Baker, p80. Abridged form in the *Concise* edition (1991), p40.

²⁸ William Laud [1573-1645] was archbishop of Canterbury [1633-45] and religious adviser to King Charles I. He sought to return Anglicanism to Rome and considered Rome as the 'true church' using political means like the King's authority and the courts of the Star Chamber and High Commission. He persecuted Puritan ideals but was eventually executed for treason in 1645 as Parliament got stronger against the king during the Civil War.

²⁹ The Duke of Buckingham was the favourite of King Charles I (and the patron of Laud who was, at one time, his chaplain).

³⁰ *The Hidden Works of Darkness*, p89-90, [1645]. *The Complete Works of Augustus Toplady*, p55.

³¹ Augustus Toplady [1740-78].

³² John Owen, Display of Arminianism, *Works* Vol 10, p16.

A royal prohibition was issued against all discussion of the controverted points in the pulpit and ecclesiastical promotions, at the disposal of the Crown, were bestowed on those who leaned to Arminian views. Laud also cruelly persecuted Calvinist Puritans.³³ This led to the attacks on Arminianism by the Puritans, such as Christopher Ness and John Owen; though a few Puritans supported Arminianism, such as John Goodwin.

Never were so many *prodigious errors* introduced into a church, with so high a hand and so little opposition, as these into ours, since the nation of Christians was known in the world. ...The fates of our church, having of late devolved the government thereof into the hands of men tainted with this poison, Arminianism became backed with the powerful arguments of praise and preferment, and quickly prevailed to beat poor naked truth into a corner.³⁴

Owen's work, *A Display of Arminianism*, is a powerful polemic against the statements of the Dutch Remonstrants. This was Owen's first publication (1642), and immediately brought him into public notice.

Though, eventually, Calvinism was formally sanctioned by Parliament, and Charles [1649] and Laud [1645] executed for treason, Arminianism bubbled underground in a small minority, notably the General Baptists, which had first established a congregation 1612. By 1660 there were scores of Arminian Baptist churches.

Amyraldism

Amyraldism was an attempt by the French Protestant theologian of the Saumur theological academy, Moise Amyraut [or Moses Amyrald, 1596-1664], to unify Calvinists and Lutherans / Arminians by de-emphasising predestination and emphasising faith. He wrote *A Short Treatise on Predestination* in 1634. The attempt at unification tries to uphold an Arminian type of universalism (God loves everyone and desires to save everyone) and tack it on to the particularism of Calvinism (God elects only some to eternal life in practice).

It was first introduced into English theology by Scottish theologian (and Amyraut's teacher at Saumur) John Cameron. Subsequently, Amyraldian pretexts have been the way that Arminianism and Calvinism have been welded together by 'Reformed' teachers, such as Richard Baxter, Andrew Fuller, Heinrich Heppel, theologian AH Strong and the modern teacher Alan Clifford. It has been called 'Hypothetical Universalism' because it is a theological impossibility. It tries to unite two opposite and contradictory things.

The essence of Amyraldism is:

- *Universalism*: salvation is hypothetically offered to all and available for all on the condition that they believe. Thus, God wills all men to be saved. But people are not saved as a result of their sin and rejection of the Gospel. The universalism does not result in the salvation of men and is thus merely hypothetical.
- *Particularism*: salvation is certain for the specific people chosen by God since men do not believe the offer.

Thus God loves everyone and decrees the salvation of everyone if they believe. However, since men don't believe, God gives faith to the elect. This is a confused and contradictory

³³ Under Laud, Calvinism became a heresy and treasonable. The fate of London lawyer, William Prynne, is typical of the time [1633]. For publishing a book denouncing plays, dancing etc, he was arraigned before the Star Chamber. His sentence was to be barred from his profession, turned out of his society, fined £5000, pilloried at Westminster and Cheapside and at both places an ear was sawn off before being imprisoned for life. Such was the effects of the entrance of Arminianism into England.

³⁴ John Owen, *Works* Vol. 10, *A Display of Arminianism*, note to the Christian Reader. AGES Software edition (2000), p25-25.

system - all men can be saved by their own faith, but only the elect are actually saved by the gift of God's faith.

The doctrine was developed to avoid the impression that God is unfair, hateful or unjust in the doctrine of election; but it completely ignores many clear scriptures, such as that God does hate the wicked, or that the reprobate are chosen to condemnation from eternity. *The Formula Helvetic Consensus* [1675] was prepared by the Swiss Reformed Church to counteract Amyraut's teachings. This was prepared by Johann Heinrich Heidegger of Zurich, and was added as an appendix to the Helvetic Confession.

Summary

Amyraldism is a confused system seeking to unite Semi-Pelagianism with Calvinism that leads towards Semi-Pelagianism.

Marrow Controversy [1645-1726]

This began with the publication in England, in 1645, of the book, *'The Marrow of Modern Divinity'*, which was attributed to the Anglican, royalist, anti-Puritan, Edward Fisher [1601-1655], though some doubt this. The name derived from its content being chiefly comprised of extracts from the Reformers and Puritans.

A second edition extended the work, which attempted to steer a course between Antinomianism and legalism, ended up being Amyraldian and close to Arminianism, emphasising the free offer of the Gospel. It was to have a significant effect on Thomas Boston [1676-1732], who read it in 1700; his recommendation led to a reprinting in 1718 with a preface by James Hog of Carnock. This angered the Moderates in the Church of Scotland, who accused the work of being Antinomian, and in 1720 the general assembly condemned the book as heretical; this was despite a document signed by Boston, Ebenezer Erskine and others approving it. Both sides of the argument claimed to support the Westminster Confession. The defenders, now called, 'The Marrowmen', were admonished by the assembly in 1722, but some Moderates continued to attack them. Boston produced a new edition in 1726 with extensive notes, but the persecution had died down by this time; however, supporters of the Marrowmen were hindered from obtaining church positions. Erskine later led a popular secession from the Church of Scotland.

The controversy is complex in its meandering and local in its problems. The source of the issue is that a party in the Scottish church had become legalists who, a) made repentance a condition of salvation (neonomianism) but, b) were opposed to universal redemption. Boston and others quite rightly opposed a) and asserted the grace of the Gospel; however, in doing this they also affirmed the free offer (Amyraldism). Another difficulty is that the 1645 publication had a preface by Joseph Caryl [1602-1673], who had been appointed by the Westminster Assembly to approve theological works for the press. It is no wonder that many church people were confused.

The key issue is that the Marrowmen (James Hog, Thomas Boston, Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, Alexander Moncrieff and others) claimed to be Calvinists but taught that Christ's atonement had a 'legal, federal sufficiency' for all men and then they based their universal offer of grace on this sufficiency. This is the error of Amyraldism and Fullerism - every man can believe because Christ died for all men and it is an Arminian statement. They avoided actually saying that 'Christ died for all men' but claimed that 'Christ is dead for all men'. This is sheer sophistry. This was Boston's Amyraldian answer to try to find mid ground between the problem of definite atonement and the universal call.

Summary

A local resurgence of Amyraldism in Scotland.

The Quakers

First known as 'The Society of Friends', this movement originated in the radical wing of Puritanism in the 1640s. 'Quakers' was a term applied to these folk since they trembled at the word of God, however, this was not Scripture but what God speaks directly to individuals. A key doctrine was the 'Inner Light', which was a form of Christian mysticism. The meeting would wait in quietness until someone started trembling and then spoke a word. This Inner Light was equated with Scripture thus each Quaker was an inspired prophet. The Friends were great humanitarians but have no creed; the final authority is in each man.

The first leader was George Fox but better known is William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania. A major split occurred in 1827 with one group following Elias Hick, who emphasised mysticism and the inner light, while the other was more evangelical and upheld Scripture.

It has a number of errors including: mysticism, denigration of Scripture, confusion on atonement, women ministers, democratic meetings, rejection of sacraments, refusal to acknowledge the dignity of rulers, and so on. Today Quakerism is varied and fragmented; most British forms are liberal; some (especially in America) are more evangelical; some are atheists and Universalists.

This group is far from being evangelical and its subjective focus means that it is essentially Pelagian.

John Wesley [1703-1791]

As everyone knows, John Wesley was an avowed Arminian and a perfectionist. What fewer people know is that he was heretical in a number of other doctrines and denied that he ever loved God at the end of his life.³⁵ But for our purposes here we concentrate on his Arminianism.

Wesley taught what old theologians used to call 'Evangelical Arminianism'. This is because Wesley's version was slightly more Biblical than the Continental version. The Remonstrants were outright Semi-Pelagians but Wesley was more Semi-Augustinian.

Wesley, unlike the Remonstrants, believed that the Fall had badly affected man and that Adam's guilt was imputed to all men, causing total depravity. Wesley also taught that fallen man couldn't choose spiritual good and that his will was only to sin:

I believe that Adam, before his fall, had such freedom of will, that he might choose either good or evil; but that, since the fall, no child of man has a natural power to choose anything that is truly good. Yet I know (and who does not?) that man has still freedom of will in things of indifferent nature.³⁶

Such is the freedom of the will; free only to evil; free to 'drink iniquity like water;' to wander farther and farther from the living God, and do more 'despite to the Spirit of grace!'³⁷

³⁵ For more information on this see my paper, *The Problem of John Wesley*.

³⁶ *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. T. Jackson, 14 vols. 1831; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 10:350.

³⁷ *Works*, 5:104.

However, to get round this (and to avoid predestination, which he hated) he affirmed (with the Semi-Augustinians and some Remonstrants) that there is a prevenient grace available to all men. Men can accept or reject this grace, so the initiation of salvation is still in the power of man. For Wesley, prevenient grace is for all men to help them believe in Christ; it is universal but it can be rejected, however, it cannot save. For Calvin grace is particular to the elect and irresistible; there is no common grace. There is no Biblical teaching on a prevenient grace.

As with other subjects, Wesley's teaching on prevenient grace was inconsistent and confused. However, it did result in teaching that it could lead a pagan to salvation who has never heard the Gospel.³⁸ Wesley certainly taught this himself.

Wesley's efforts led to a growth of Arminian groups, which only became separate churches after his death. Thus the Arminian influence of Methodists and General Baptists was growing, but not without a fight from Calvinist polemic writers, such as Augustus Toplady.

Summary

Wesleyanism is a form of Arminian Semi-Pelagianism but with the addition of an unbiblical prevenient grace and an acceptance of total depravity.

The Enlightenment [mid-17th century to early 19th century]

Also known as 'The Age of Reason', often cited as spanning the period between the English Revolution of 1688 to the French Revolution of 1789. The outstanding English philosophers were David Hume [1711-1776], John Locke [1632-1704] and Adam Smith. This was a time when important scientific advances were made in chemistry, geology and medicine. In Germany the *Aufklärung* ('Enlightenment') was a literary and philosophical movement that included Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, and philosopher Emanuel Kant. The movement against established beliefs and institutions gained momentum throughout the 18th century under Voltaire, Rousseau, Turgot, Condorcet, and others. It influenced the Romantic Movement in the arts by releasing the more individualist attitudes in which this movement was based, and as the Romantics themselves reacted against the coldly scientific intellectualism which the Enlightenment represented.³⁹

The Enlightenment gave birth to Deism⁴⁰ in the late 17th century, and an emphasis upon rationality, which led to the development of Unitarian and universalistic movements. These were essentially a rebirth of Socinianism and Pelagianism. The study of nature and reason became the key source of human authority. The Bible was only accepted as it supported nature and reason. This was the elevation of man in religion.

Unitarianism, which rejects the Trinity and the deity of Christ and upholds looseness in theology, came to America as early as 1710; by 1750 most Congregational ministers around Boston had denied the Trinity. It appeared in England in John Biddle, with congregations being formed in Essex in 1774, being legally recognised in 1813. The scientist Joseph Priestley was a famous Unitarian preacher. Since Unitarianism also teaches the goodness

³⁸ H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill, 1988), 161-70) for a helpful discussion. See also Charles A. Rogers, *The Concept of Prevenient Grace in the Theology of John Wesley* (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1967), 243-47. See also Paul Fahy, *The Problem of John Wesley*.

³⁹ Adapted from *The Oxford World Encyclopaedia*.

⁴⁰ Deism was a rationalistic explanation of God. It taught that God made the universe, set up physical laws to govern it and then left it to run its course like a clockmaker leaving a wound up clock. There was no single systematic theology but several types of Deism. The tendency was to natural religion and a denial of revelation.

of human nature and criticises the doctrines of the Fall, the atonement and hell, we can see that it is essentially Pelagian regarding salvation.

Schleiermacher [Friedrich Daniel Ernst, 1768-1834]

This famous German theologian had a profound effect on the church, though this effect was deleterious; he has been called the father of Christian liberalism and was influenced by the philosopher Kant.

He wrote an apologetic for Christianity in the post-Enlightenment world, which was influenced by Romanticism. He also wrote against the authority of Scripture positing a foundation of personal, subjective revelation. He denied the two natures of Christ and the Biblical doctrine of sin. Christ did not die for our sins and there is no need for resurrection; there is no atonement, no cross, and no resurrection.

Jesus mediates a new, mystical, redemptive awareness of God to humanity, reflecting his Pietistic background. We are saved by perfecting our God consciousness; as we become more aware of the infinite, our experience moves from dependence on ourselves to dependence on God. We perfect it by hearing the story of Jesus; that is all we need. All we need is to develop the feeling of absolute dependence.

This was a liberal theology based upon man, similar to modern theologians like Paul Tillich and JAT Robinson. He taught, essentially, a Pelagian salvation.

Summary of the Enlightenment

Focus upon man and reason; Pelagian salvation.

New Divinity & New Haven Theology

This was the theological tradition, which arose following the work of the American revivalist preacher Jonathan Edwards [1703-1758] called *New England Theology*. This was not a unified set of teachings but rather a way of reasoning on abstruse matters, with a strong practical / ethical ethos. Edwards was a Calvinist who honoured the divine majesty of God in sovereign grace, but those who followed his philosophical methods, gradually degenerated in their theology.

What followed was *New Divinity*, as proposed by the New England pastors (and friends of Edwards) Joseph Bellamy [1719-1790] and Samuel Hopkins [1721-1803]. Bellamy promoted the Governmental view of the atonement. Later modifications in the 19th century saw worse teachings appear under Timothy Dwight (1752-1817, Edward's grandson and President of Yale College). Human reason was elevated, man's inability was modified and man's will emphasised. Jonathan Edwards Jr. [1745-1801] extended the idea of Governmental atonement and emphasised the law of God for the believer. Yale professor Nathaniel Taylor (1786-1858) advanced the rationalistic degeneration, producing *New Haven Theology*; reversing Edward's teaching on free-will and advocating that man has the power of free choice to self-determination (to do good). Sin was viewed as the accumulated faults of human actions rather than a depraved nature that sins (denial of total depravity). Gradually a universal atonement was also accepted, the predestinating purpose of God was denied and the imputation of Adam's sin abandoned.

This theological spectrum of beliefs influenced both Charles Finney in America and Andrew Fuller in Britain; especially Taylor's emphasis of an internal, moral, common sense that drives theology (following Scottish philosophy) and the power of human will.

Summary

This influential movement started as Semi-Pelagian and became increasingly Pelagian.

CG Finney [1792-1895]

Finney held a number of heretical doctrines and was influenced by New Divinity. These include:

- A denial of the imputation of Adam's sin.
- A denial of total depravity; man is a free moral agent.
- Denied election.
- A denial of Christ's penal substitution.
- Affirmation of the Governmental Theory of the atonement.⁴¹
- Denial of justification by Christ's work, '*Neither is the atonement nor anything in the mediatorial work of Christ, the foundation of our justification, in the sense of the source, moving or procuring cause.*'⁴²
- Affirmation of the infallibility of human reason: '*there can be no error in the a priori intuitions of reason*'.⁴³
- Affirmation that a man can create a new heart for himself; regeneration is only a change in the will. Affirmed man's ability to repent without grace. He confused regeneration with conversion.
- Affirmation that the drawing power of the Holy Spirit was the human persuasion used by preachers of the Gospel.
- He denied the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers. Justification was only an amnesty.
- Affirmation that sanctification was not a work of God in the believer but was by human effort. Regeneration was a change from entire sinfulness to entire holiness *for the time being!* Continuance in this was possible if a man tried to be obedient hard enough. This is a version of perfectionism.
- Affirmed Utopianism / Millennialism (working to create a perfect society; the human establishment of the Kingdom of God through conversions and social reform).

Regarding conversion, Finney's theology was a return to Remonstrant Semi-Pelagianism. Indeed, his emphasis was so strong that it comes close to outright Pelagianism. Examples of this are in his statements that man regenerates himself by free-will.

'Conversion, or regeneration, is the work of man' ... a change of heart is the sinner's own act ... God commands you to make you a new heart, expects you to do it; and, if ever it is done, you must do it. And let me tell you, sinner, if you do not do it you will go to hell; and to all eternity you will feel that you deserved to be sent there for not having done it.⁴⁴

These are extremely serious errors. It is unbelievable that Finney could be accepted by any evangelical since these doctrines are very close to being non-Christian tenets.

Finney exerted a powerful influence on subsequent evangelical movements, such as revivalism, the holiness Movement, Pentecostalism, the Charismatic Movement etc. His 'New Measures' led to the 'decisionism' and 'easy believism' now common in evangelicalism, which is responsible for hordes of superficial believers. This is despite the fact that the vast majority of his many converts fell away, as he himself later admitted. The power of his melodramatic, over-emotional, humanistic revivals and his racy books

⁴¹ The Governmental Theory proposed that God controls the world by moral influence rather than predestination. Men are encouraged to obey moral law rather than God decreeing the salvation of particular sinners.

³⁰ CG Finney, *Systematic Theology*, Bethany House Publishers, reprint 1994, p375-376. Abridged edition, p336.

⁴³ CG Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology*, Lecture I, OF THE UNDERSTANDING.

⁴⁴ CG Finney, *Lectures on Revival*, p197.

describing them are what has really grabbed men's attention instead of the truth. Far too many young Christians have been given his *Lectures on Revivals* and drawn into his teaching.

This is an important point, very many churches, organisations and groups are tainted with Finney's evil theology. For instance, all people that focus upon an emotional revivalism are affected by Finney's ideas, such as his restatements in Melody Green's magazines. An example of the re-appearance of his Moral Government Theory (MGT) is found in YWAM. People trained by this evangelistic organisation were immersed in Finney's MGT ideas. Note this testimony:

I joined YWAM in 1973 and was a staff worker for five and one-half years. When I joined I had no theological background or training of any kind. When I left the organization I was saturated with and zealously defended MGT and its assertions, although I did not really understand what it was. All my knowledge of other systems came from straw man arguments which I received in the schools and intellectual atmosphere of the organization. Within the organization there were no theological works for the investigation of other views available.

MGT has taken the views a step further than the Pelagians did; it is denied that God could have foreknowledge in the case of free-will beings; it is denied that God is morally immutable; it is taught that God changes his mind and counsels; and it is taught that Christ's death did not pay for our sins.⁴⁵

Finney's MGT is worse than Grotius' Governmental Theory, close to Socinianism and similar to the modern Open Theism. One writer says that the modern form of it:

... denies the fundamental Christian doctrines of God's perfection in knowledge, goodness, and power; original sin; human moral inability; the substitutionary satisfaction of God's justice in Christ's atoning death; redemption; and justification by the crediting of Christ's righteousness to believers by grace through faith apart from works. ... These denials are unbiblical and are so serious as to warrant classifying MGT as non-Christian.⁴⁶

The writer also gives examples of missionaries ruined and depressed as a result of being trained in this theology by YWAM.

Summary

Finney was a serious heretic and an extreme Semi-Pelagian, very close to Pelagianism itself.

Oberlin theology

Oberlin was a Congregationalist college in Ohio. Oberlin theology is closely connected to the teachings of revivalist Charles Finney and the ideas arising from New Divinity. Also involved was Asa Mahan [1799-1889]. Finney was professor of theology (from 1835) at the newly opened Oberlin Collegiate Institute in Ohio (now Oberlin College) and later became president from 1851-1866, taking over from Mahan. His serious errors were tantamount to Pelagianism.

Oberlin denied Biblical justification by faith and taught a form of perfectionism. Finney wrote, as a professor at Oberlin, that he had gone far beyond NW Taylor (New Haven Theology) and brought liberal Calvinism close to Methodist perfectionism.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Greg Robertson; *Moral Government theology: is it Pelagian?* 1981.

⁴⁶ E. Calvin Beisner; *The False God and Gospel of Moral Government Theology*, Christian Research Institute, Article ID: DM610.

⁴⁷ *Lectures on Systematic Theology* (1846).

Where the imputation of Adam's sin is denied there is erosion of total depravity and less cause to require a thorough atonement. Such systems just teach a need for some kind of forgiveness of offences, or even just a change in will. Where the imputation of Christ's righteousness is denied, there can be no Biblical justification and no acceptance with God.

This theological system allies closely with the erroneous system of Andrew Fuller in promoting works-righteousness. Fuller was originally influenced by the earlier form of New Divinity but since his death there has been much cross-fertilisation. New Divinity and Finneyism have been accepted in some English circles, while Fuller has had a slow but increasing influence in the US. When folk hear preachers praise Fuller and Finney and hear of their evangelistic success (much exaggerated), or refer to New Haven Theology with esteem, they are prone to accept that these systems must be orthodox without looking into them closely.

Summary

Oberlin continued Finney's and New Divinity's Pelagianism.

Andrew Fuller [1754-1815]

Fuller is the modern darling of many American and English Calvinists (e.g. John Piper, Peter Masters, Michael Haykin) but his theology is far from Calvin. It was an eccentric mixture of Amyraldism, Grotianism (Governmental Theory), New Divinity influences and natural law. His writings are hard to pin down since he appears to deliberately alter the meaning of words from place to place. The fact that his preaching was indeed heretical is confirmed by contemporary leaders who stated that where his influence was most effective, these groups later became Socinians. His character is also very questionable since he was open to fraudulent practices.

In a nutshell, he taught that: it is the duty [and ability] of all who hear the Gospel to believe in Christ with such a faith as issues in salvation. In other words, anyone [elect or reprobate] who hears the Gospel can believe. A key foundation of Fuller's theology is that man has a natural ability to respond to God. He emphasised that all men have a Gospel awareness deep down and know they should accept it. This means that men are not totally depraved, as they have power to do spiritual good and believe; that there is no election of some to life and some to condemnation; that Christ died for everyone without exception and that the Spirit calls all men equally. Thus it destroys four of the five cardinal points of Calvinism. Even Fuller himself admitted, '*I allow that the principles here defended may be inconsistent with the doctrines of grace.*'⁴⁸

Essentially, Fuller was a liberal Amyraldian who brought notions that had plagued the continent to English Baptists. Just as Wesley promoted Arminianism among British Anglican evangelicals, Fuller championed Amyraldism among Calvinistic Baptists. That is, the notion that God loves everyone and wants to save everyone; that Christ died for everyone, but since everyone fails to believe, God will select those who would believe to salvation. Man can believe, but fails to in practice. Jesus died for everyone, but only died for some in practice. This is utter confusion and nonsense. However on some points Fuller is worse than an Amyraldian and becomes a rationalistic, humanistic liberal or even a Pelagian.

He both affirmed and denied election: '*Faith instead of being 'the gift of God,' is the effect of our having improved the help afforded, while others neglected it, if we think we do not ascribe the*

⁴⁸ Fuller, *Works*, Vol 2, p367.

*very turning point of salvation to our own virtue, we greatly deceive ourselves. But election, while it places no bar in the way of any man which would not have been there without it.'*⁴⁹

He denied particular redemption, '*We must ... acknowledge an objective fulness in Christ's atonement, sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, were the whole world to believe in him.*'⁵⁰
'*The atonement of Christ ... [is] equal to the salvation of the whole world, were the whole world to embrace it.*'⁵¹

He perverted the doctrine of the Fall and rejected total depravity: '*men have the same natural powers to love Christ as to hate him, to believe as to disbelieve*'.⁵²

He denied penal substitution, following Grotius: '*The sufferings of Christ in our stead, therefore, are not a punishment inflicted ... but an extraordinary interposition of infinite wisdom and love; not contrary to, but rather above the law, deviating from the letter, but more than preserving the spirit of it.*'⁵³

He perverted many other doctrines, but this will suffice for our purposes here.⁵⁴

Summary of Fullerism

Amyraldian in essence, but embracing Semi-Pelagianism and even comes close to Pelagianism and liberalism.

19th - 20th century heresies

The Enlightenment, the Age of Reason, followed by the popularisation of the Theory of Evolution by Charles Darwin, spawned a growing atheism. Paganism and atheism began to become popular after centuries where people believed in a monotheistic God. This led to movement after movement, new religion after new religion, new cult upon new cult and sectarianism in the church.

Society became much more diverse, polytheistic, hedonistic, idealistic, romantic and gullible. Absolute nonsense appeared to be able to transfix eminent minds, such as Arthur Conan Doyle's support for fairies, spiritualists and ghosts; even though most of this was fraudulent cons.

The theological basis for many of these new movements could be described as Pelagian or Semi-Pelagian. It is impossible to give details on all these in this short paper, but most of them are well known.

Liberalism and Modernism

The rise of atheism led to a public acceptance of books that denied God and supernaturalism (such as Biblical miracles). The rise of rationalism led to the elevation of man's thinking and philosophical speculation, which denied the authority of Scripture. The popularity of evolution led to the false axiom that ancient peoples (Israelites like Moses) were illiterate and that the early Biblical books were not written by the stated authors but written long afterwards.

⁴⁹ Fuller, *Works*, 'Election Consistent', Vol. ? p341, 342

⁵⁰ Fuller, *Dialogues*, p231.

⁵¹ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p374.

⁵² Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p768.

⁵³ Fuller, *Works*, Vol. 2, p689.

⁵⁴ For more information see the author's booklet, *The Problem of Fullerism*.

All of this undermined Scripture, and consequently, undermined all Biblical theology. Before long the resurrection of Christ was openly denied, even in certain church circles (such as Anglicanism). Liberalism was the authority of human wisdom and the denial of faith in Scripture. The result of this was that salvation was the work of man or was unnecessary. It gave a boost to Unitarianism and universalism.

Development of modern Pantheism, Transcendentalism and Romanticism

Romanticism or 'the Romantic Movement' is the western attitude to art and creativity that dominated much of European culture in the first half of the 19th century, shaping American Transcendentalism. Its chief emphasis was upon freedom of individual self-expression and sentimentality or emotionalism.

The ordered rationality of the Enlightenment was abandoned in favour of emotional intensity, often taken to extremes of rapture, nostalgia, or sentimentality and often involving mysticism. Examples include the primitivism of Rousseau in art; the poetry of Coleridge, Keats, Byron and Wordsworth; the Romantic school of painting (e.g. Friedrich, Constable and Turner); the Pre-Raphaelites; the music of Beethoven and Mahler; the works of William Blake; the Gothic novel (e.g. Mary Shelley), and the taste for the sublime and picturesque.

Transcendentalism was an American attempt to curb the dispassionate rationalism of the Enlightenment by combining mysticism with romanticism. It included Ralph Waldo Emerson [1803-1882], Henry David Thoreau [1817-1862] and others. Doctrines include the immanence of God, truth by intuition instead of rationalism, and a rejection of dogmatism and authority-based religion.

Pantheism is the belief that God exists in all things and all things are God. It accompanies mysticism and pervaded a number of 19th century movements. It is the essence of Hinduism, which became popular in this period.

Thus this period is a reaction to rationalism of the Enlightenment (pendulum effect in history) whereby emotionalism, sentimentality, individuality, subjectivism and mysticism come to the fore. In some it led to an acceptance of spiritualism and clairvoyance (which became dominant in the mid-19th century). In others it led to development of new religions and religious communities.

Influence of eastern mysticism and occultism (spiritualism).

In the 19th century translations of eastern religious sacred writings became available in English and helped generate a revived interest in eastern mysticism. Such works included *The Upanishads* part of the *Vedas* (Hinduism); *The Tao Te Ching* (Taoism), the writings of Confucius, and books on Buddhism and Zen. Anglo-Catholic mystic Evelyn Underhill wrote her key book on mysticism in 1911, which was widely read. The Vedanta Society was the first Hindu sect to arrive in the US in 1895.

Increased travel opportunities, for some, added to inculcating romanticism about the Far East when their travels were published. Later, novels started to appear about Shangri-La (a Tibetan utopia in James Hilton's novel *Lost Horizon*), Japan, China, India (Rudyard Kipling) and so on. Novels were even written about key religious figures such as Siddhartha Gautama Buddha (e.g. Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*). All this made eastern religions fascinating to western young people who were tired of formal Christian religion.

Celebrities embraced the principles of eastern mysticism openly, such as Walt Whitman in his poem *Song of Myself*: 'Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am

touched from' or Shirley MacLaine much later, 'You must never worship anyone or anything other than self. For you are god. To love self is to love god'.

This interest in eastern religions had a lasting effect on the west, much boosted in the 60s, which continues to this day, now mostly focused in the New Age sects, Transcendental Meditation, occultism and other cults.

In all this focus on eastern mysticism, the essential basis of salvation was human works and a denial of the need of Christ's atonement – Pelagianism.

PP Quimby, New Thought, positive thinking, Unity

These followed on from the propagation of hypnotism/mesmerism and the Metaphysical Healing Mvt. developed in the late 1800s. There were many forms of faith healing using this method, but PP Quimby [1802-1866] deserves more attention.

Quimby started healing meetings in New England based upon mesmerism and healed Mary Baker Eddy in 1862. He taught that sickness was only in the mind and developed what later became 'New Thought' which was a syncretism of Christianity, Gnosticism, the occult, Spiritualism, Platonism, Hinduism and more. In a nutshell he made witchcraft credible in scientific & religious language. This is extremely important as it lays the foundation for the aberrations that followed. It was the beginning of the Mind Sciences becoming acceptable.

Quimby's theology is utterly heretical, denies the atonement, and claims people can become God (mixture of Hinduism and Gnosticism). Faith is the power that creates upon positive confession (the basis of Word Faith) and can lead to success, prosperity and healing. Other groups jumped on this bandwagon, such as Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Science and Unity School of Christianity. With Quimby, occult mind techniques and mystical teachings influenced gullible Christians. Essentially, mind science, visualisation, incubating prayer, mental healing, positive confession etc. are all applications of occult magic – sorcery.

New Thought was a religious break away movement, arising out of Christian Science, developed by Methodist minister Warren Evans and Julius Dresser. It is based upon the Platonic, occult and mystical healing ideas of PP Quimby [e.g. sin and disease only exist in the mind] plus some influences from Emmanuel Swedenborg. New Thought ideas permeate some radical Pentecostal/Charismatic and Word Faith teachings.

Unity School of Christianity was a syncretic American religious movement. It began in 1887 when a certain Mrs Fillmore was healed. The Fillmores studied Christian Science and New Thought and developed Unity out of this mix. It is mainly a teaching establishment to serve enquirers but is far from being Biblical, being a blend of mysticism, Gnosticism and Hinduism (syncretism).

All of these mystical movements, which combine occult, eastern mysticism and Christianity, place the theological emphasis upon man. Thus their theology is, at root, Pelagian or Semi-Pelagian.

Theosophy and other mystical cults

Theosophy was an occult movement founded in 1875 by Madame Helena Blavatsky [1831-1891] and continued by Annie Besant [1847-1933] and others. It's teachings are: the essential unity of all religions, the brotherhood of man, Hindu pantheism, a Gnostic view of knowledge and deity, Platonism and oriental mysticism. It was very influential in the

early 20th century and spawned a number of other movements, especially Anthroposophy and New Ageism.

Since man saves himself, or salvation is denied altogether, it is essentially Pelagian.

Holiness Movement & the Pentecostal Movement

The Pentecostal historian, Vinson Synan affirms,

Although the Pentecostal movement began in the United States, itself a significant fact, its theological and intellectual origins were British. The basic premises of the movement's theology were constructed by John Wesley in the Eighteenth century. As a product of Methodism, the holiness-Pentecostal movement traces its lin[e]age through the Wesleys to Anglicanism and from thence to Roman Catholicism. This theological heritage places the Pentecostals outside the Calvinistic, Reformed tradition which culminated in the Baptist and Presbyterian movements in the United States. The basic Pentecostal theological position might be described as Arminian, perfectionistic, premillennial, and charismatic.⁵⁵

Thus the foundation of Pentecostalism is Arminian Semi-Pelagianism.

Cults & sects – Mormons, Christadelphians, 7th Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Shakers

Multiple heresies, including the idea of man becoming God.

- Salvation in Mormonism – Mormon baptism, denial of justification by faith, faith in Christ and Joseph Smith but mostly through human meritorious works.
- Salvation in Christadelphianism – perseverance in good works and baptism.
- Salvation in 7th Day Adventists – keeping 7th day holy, kosher diet and legalism expressed in: teetotalism, avoiding gambling, avoiding jewellery and cosmetics, and avoiding dances and movies.
- Salvation in Jehovah's Witnesses – faith in Christ's (who is not divine) ransom, baptism as a JW, good works and preaching the JW message.
- Salvation in the Shakers – celibacy, communism of goods, uniformity of dress, separation from the world.

All are essentially Semi-Pelagian or Pelagian being variations of works salvation.

Social Gospel

Influenced by Marxist ideology and publications of left-wing socio-political movements, e.g. the Fabians in England and the Progressives in the USA; both sought a utopian society. The root of much of this is liberalism and an emphasis upon man's work.

Conclusion

All these (and many more) modern movements are opposed to the tenets of Calvinism and mostly emphasise works salvation in one form or another. Thus all are variants of Pelagianism.

⁵⁵ Vinson Synan; *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, p217.

Recent developments

Karl Barth [1886-1968]

Barth was an important Swiss theologian who initiated Neo-Orthodoxy, a revision of Reformed theology introducing liberal elements, though he opposed liberalism.

Barth stressed the transcendence of God revealed in Christ but this extreme Christocentric approach ends up denying some Biblical doctrines. Barth denied the election of some and the reprobation of some in an absolute eternal decree. Instead he said that Christ was the object and subject of both election and reprobation. Jesus embodies God's election of men and God's rejection of sin. He is the electing God (who elects all of humanity in himself) and the elect man (all who are in Christ are elect). Non-believers have not understood their election in Christ. This is universalism, despite his denials.

His teaching on Scripture is also flawed in that it denies an objective revelation of God in writing. Revelation is God speaking through his word; thus it becomes Scripture when you experience God speaking in it and not before. He viewed sin, not as transgression of the law but as man's attempt to free himself from grace in which all men stand. His view of salvation is thus universalistic; Christ suffered for all so that all could be redeemed. He denied that this was universalistic but sound theologians condemn it as such.

Summary

As a universalistic system where all are saved, Barth is (in essentials) Pelagian regarding salvation, though it is not so much the work of man as that all men have grace.

Charismatic Movement

Semi-officially begun in 1960⁵⁶ with the tongue-speaking of Episcopal pastor Dennis Bennett (see *Nine O'clock In The Morning*, 1970) and spurred on by David Wilkerson's experiences amongst New York street gangs (see *The Cross & the Switchblade*, 1963), Pentecostalism burst into the traditional churches, becoming the Charismatic Movement. The books reporting these experiences of the Holy Spirit sold millions. The journalist, John Sherrill also wrote another popular book, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (1964).

The spread of the Charismatic Movement is too varied, complex and widespread to explain here, but it is well known anyway. The point is that traditional churches took on board Pentecostal doctrines of the baptism of the Spirit, healing, tongues and prophecy but these hid other foundational Pentecostal doctrines such as Arminianism and Dispensationalism. Over time many British Charismatic churches found that they became more and more Arminian. For instance, far more evangelical churches adopted the decisionist methods of Arminianism (salvation by raising a hand, coming to the front etc.) after 1960 than before. Today it is standard practice, questioned by almost no one.

Many Charismatic leaders were proudly Arminian from the start and new denominations were formed (e.g. Harvestime) that attracted new people for the worship experience which included tongues and singing in the Spirit, but which turned members into Arminians. A few denominations, such as New Frontiers, claimed to be Calvinistic but in fact became more and more Semi-Pelagian as time went on; in fact some churches in this denomination are Pelagian and even the flagship central church has had preachers propound outright Pelagianism on its doorstep.

⁵⁶ In fact a number of Pentecostal leaders had made breaches into the traditional churches via healing crusades or ecumenical conferences since the early 50s; such as Agnes Sanford, William Branham, Oral Roberts, TL Osborn and Gordon Lindsay.

Developments of Charismaticism into even worse areas, such as Word Faith, Dominionism, and the New Apostolic Reformation bring a further syncretism of occult ideas on top of Arminianism, stemming from the dependence upon New Thought doctrines and Latter Rain. Some of these have ultra-heretical ideas about the atonement that are Pelagianism plus occultism.⁵⁷

The subjective emphasis on the self in this movement not only leads to passivity in worship and self-gratification in one's walk with God,⁵⁸ but also leads to a foundation of Pelagianism, or at least Semi-Pelagianism, in Gospel preaching. Indeed, very few Charismatic preachers seem to actually know what the Gospel is. The Gospel message of virtually every British Charismatic church would be based upon: *'God loves you and has an abundant plan for your life; anyone can be saved right now if you accept Jesus as your Saviour; give your heart to Christ'*; but this is pure Semi-Pelagianism.⁵⁹

The Charismatic Movement brought the Semi-Pelagianism and occult syncretism of Pentecostalism into the traditional churches.

The Free Offer of the Gospel

The free offer (or universal offer, well-meant offer, sincere offer) is an effort by modern Calvinists (Presbyterians since the 1920s; Baptists since around Fuller's time) to accommodate universalism in God's will and uphold the supposed priority of the love of God for all men [in fact the prime attribute of God is his holiness]. It is close to Amyraldism in suggesting a universal grace and a universal atonement but only the elect are actually saved.

Its interpretation of the supposed universal Biblical texts is essentially Arminian. The death of Christ is sufficient and available for all, but in practice only effective for some. [For Arminians, those who repent do so from their own will; for Amyraldians and 4-point Calvinists, they do so because they are elect.] This enables preachers to invite all Gospel hearers to make a decision for Christ and to tell them that God loves them and has a salvation ready to give them if they accept Christ.

The effect of this perverts the Gospel message by teaching the lie that God intends and desires the salvation of reprobates. But, how can God love those he hates; how can he desire the salvation of those he has damned? How can the Gospel be based on a lie? It misrepresents God. It also implicitly proposes the initiation of salvation is the will of man.

Anyone who preaches a Gospel that is based upon: *'God loves everyone, Jesus died for everyone, anyone can respond and be saved, make a decision now'*, is preaching a free offer Gospel. Historically the Gospel was preached as: man is guilty before God as a sinner, this guilt will result in eternal condemnation, Jesus is the only saviour to save man from sin, the only mediator between man and God, seek Jesus and his salvation, cry to him for

⁵⁷ For instance the teachings of Kenneth Copeland: general mysticism; Christians are little gods; Christ did not claim to be God; healing in the atonement; denial of definite atonement: *'When Jesus cried "It is finished!" He was not speaking of the plan of redemption. ... Jesus' death on the cross was only the beginning of the complete work of redemption.'* 'Jesus - Our Lord of Glory', *Believer's Voice of Victory*, April, 1982, p3. *'He [Jesus] accepted the sin nature of Satan in His own spirit. ... Why do you think Moses ... raised the serpent upon that pole instead of a lamb? ... And the Lord said, "Because it was a sign of Satan that was hanging on the cross.'* *What Happened From the Cross to the Throne?* Cassette tape.

⁵⁸ Such as the name it and claim it of Word Faith.

⁵⁹ The truth is: God does not love everyone; God has no good plan for the reprobate, only hell; Jesus only died for the elect; without grace no man can receive Christ.

mercy, cast yourself upon God. Then time was left for the awakened sinner to understand the depths of his sin and need of salvation before coming to Christ in repentance and faith.

Summary

A re-appearance of Amyraldism in modern guise.

Jewish Roots

This is a fairly recent development spawned by the widespread acceptance of Dispensationalism, which separates Gentile and Jewish believers, Israel and the church. There is a wide variety of influences within this movement from Zionism to Messianic Christianity (churches for Jews alone) to just adopting Jewish idioms, teachings and practices.

Most Jewish Root teachers, and their followers, tend to be Dispensationalist in eschatology, Arminian in theology and Charismatic in church practice. Some are extreme in these while others claim to be more moderate. The problem is that these are all errors. Thus Jewish Root teaching is Semi-Pelagian at best; some forms that teach Jewish legalism (such as the need to be circumcised) are more Pelagian.

Open Theism

This was initially proposed by former Reformed theologian Clark Pinnock and is followed by Roger Forster, Gerald Coates and Graham Kendrick. It is a form of radical Arminianism that so emphasises the freedom of man that it claims God cannot know the future and is thus not sovereign. This is an extreme Semi-Pelagianism, very similar to Moral Government Theory.

New Perspective on Paul / Federal Vision

The key factors of this error are a new way of looking at Second Temple Judaism⁶⁰, and thus reappraising Paul's teaching on justification as understood by Reformation theologians. The novelty began with writings by liberals EP Sanders and then James DG Dunn, but was revised by the evangelical NT Wright, followed by John Armstrong and others. Since the movement is diverse, it is difficult to summarise the position.

It denies the traditional understanding of the book of Romans. '[The Traditional Protestant way] *'of reading Romans has systematically done violence to the text for hundreds of years.'*⁶¹ Paul was not concerned about grace versus works for salvation, but about the status of Gentiles in the church. Justification was more about Jewish Gentile relations than personal standing before God. Justification is not concerned with acquittal from sin, but with being established in the covenant community.

Justification is 'covenantal inclusion', a kind of badge of Christianity, something that shows believers are in relationship with God and each other; it is not about being saved nor a part of the Gospel. Righteousness is not something given to us by God, but is rather the declaration that we have believed in Christ and are recognised as being in covenant. Dunn and Wright openly deny the imputed righteousness of Christ. Those New Perspective theologians who still affirm it, do so with compromise and confusion.

This posits a form of works righteousness in salvation, which is a form of Pelagianism. It led to the subsequent error of Federal Vision in American Reformed Presbyterian churches, which more openly teaches works righteousness.

⁶⁰ That is from c. 515 BC when the original second temple was rebuilt, to 70 AD when Herod's temple was destroyed by the Roman army.

Summary

Period	Doctrinal movement
Pre-5 th c.	Judaising and Ebionism.
5 th c.	Pelagianism confronted by Augustinianism.
5 th c.	Semi-Pelagianism
5 th c. – early 6 th c.	Semi-Augustinianism
Mid 9 th c.	Gottschalk and the predestination controversy. Semi-Pelagianism upheld by Rome.
1079-1142	Peter Abelard: Moral Example Theory of Atonement.
Medieval period, 11 th – 14 th c.	Scholasticism (Aquinas etc.) Augustinian in name only.
Medieval period onwards	Romanism
Mid 16 th c.	Anabaptists
Mid 16 th c.	Michael Servetus
Mid 16 th c.	Socinianism
1588	Louis Molina - Middle Knowledge – suppresses predestination.
1610 onwards	Arminianism
1583-1645	Hugo Grotius; Governmental Theory of Atonement.
1633	Archbishop Laud becomes Archbishop of Canterbury and promotes Arminianism to subvert Puritan Calvinism and support Romanism, The beginning of Arminianism in England.
Mid 17 th c. onwards	Amyraldism
1650 onwards	Quakers
1645-1726	Marrow Controversy
1703-1791	John Wesley; Arminian revival.
Mid-17 th c. to early 19 th c.	The Enlightenment; elevation of human reason.
Late 17 th c.	Deism
Early 18 th c.	Unitarianism and universalism.
18 th c. – early 19 th c.	New Divinity & New Haven Theology
1792-1895	CG Finney; near Pelagianism.
Mid 19 th c. onwards	Oberlin theology
1754-1815	Andrew Fuller; Amyraldism and Semi-Pelagianism.
19 th c.	Liberalism and Modernism
19 th c.	Evolutionary Theory
19 th c.	Explosion of new religions, cults and sects; interest in eastern mysticism. Cults & sects – Mormons, Christadelphians, 7 th Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Shakers.
19 th c.	Development of modern Pantheism, Transcendentalism and Romanticism.
19 th c.	PP Quimby, New Thought, positive thinking, Unity
19 th c.	Theosophy and other mystical cults.
19 th c. – 20 th c.	Holiness Movement & the Pentecostal Movement.
Late 19 th c. – 20 th c.	Social Gospel.
Late 19 th c. – mid 20 th c.	Barth
Mid 20 th c. onwards	Charismatic Movement.
	The Free Offer of the Gospel
Late 20 th c.	Open Theism
Late 20 th c onwards	Jewish Root theology.
21 st c.	New Perspective on Paul / Federal Vision.

⁶¹ NT Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, Eerdmans, (1997), p117.

Compromises & contradictions of Biblical atonement

Ebionism

Man must obey the Mosaic Law as well as trust in Christ in order to be saved. Salvation by works and Christ.

Pelagianism

Atonement not necessary; man can fulfil the law by free-will and following Christ's example. Salvation by works.

Semi-Pelagianism

Christ's atonement is for everybody, but man must choose Christ. Salvation by works and Christ.

Semi-Augustinianism

Atonement is for everyone but prevenient grace is needed to obtain it. Those who act on this grace are saved. Salvation by works and Christ.

Abelard's Moral Example Theory

Christ's atonement provided an example for man demonstrating God's love. When men consider this they love God back and follow him. Salvation by works.

Romanism

Atonement is potentially for everyone but salvation is by works and prevenient grace through the church.

Socinianism

Denied the atonement as penal substitution, teaching a form of governmental theory. Christ's death was merely an example of faith and obedience. There is no punishment for sin; men repent from their own power. Salvation by works.

Arminianism

Semi-Pelagianism - Christ's atonement is for everybody, but man must choose Christ. Salvation by works and Christ.

Amyraldism

Christ's death is for all hypothetically but in the end only for some in actuality. Two contradictory wills in God. Salvation by works and Christ.

Marrow Controversy

A local resurgence of Amyraldism in Scotland. Christ's death is for all. Salvation by works and Christ.

Grotius' Governmental Theory

Development of Moral Example Theory, no penal substitution. Salvation by works.

Unitarianism

Universalism; Christ died for everyone. Salvation by works.

Wesleyanism

Evangelical Arminians; Semi-Pelagianism - Christ's atonement is for everybody, but man must choose Christ using prevenient grace. Salvation by works and Christ.

New Divinity, New Haven Theology

Growing Pelagianism. Salvation by works and Christ.

Finneyism, Oberlin Theology

Increasing Pelagianism and Moral Government Theory. Salvation by works and Christ.

Fullerism

Christ death sufficient for all. Confusion on atonement, justification and other matters. Two contradictory wills in God regarding salvation. Salvation by works and Christ.

Liberalism

Denial of supernaturalism and the need of salvation. Salvation by works, especially reason.

19th century cults & sects

A wide variety of error on the atonement. Salvation by works, or by works and Christ.

Social Gospel

Salvation by works.

Pentecostalism & Charismaticism

Generally Arminian. Salvation by works and Christ.

Barthianism

All are saved because all have grace. Universalism.

The Free Offer of the Gospel

Re-appearance of Amyraldism in modern guise. Christ's death is for all hypothetically but in the end only for some in actuality. Two contradictory wills in God. Salvation by works and Christ.

Jewish Root theology

Arminian. Salvation by works and Christ.

New Perspective on Paul / Federal Vision.

Salvation by works and Christ.

Compromises & contradictions of predestination

Pelagianism

No predestination.

Semi-Pelagianism

God predestines those whom he foresees will have faith.

Socinianism

No predestination.

Louis Molina - Middle Knowledge

God predestines those whom he foresees will have faith.

Arminianism

God predestines those whom he foresees will have faith.

Hugo Grotius; Governmental Theory of Atonement.

No predestination.

Amyraldism

Confused, hypothetical predestination.

Unitarianism and universalism.

No predestination.

Wesleyanism

God predestines those whom he foresees will have faith.

New Divinity & New Haven Theology

No election of some to salvation.

CG Finney

No election of some to salvation.

Andrew Fuller

Confused on predestination. No sovereign election of some to salvation.

Liberalism

No predestination.

Conclusion

The essential error of all these systems is the denial of total depravity. If you deny this you effectively deny all the doctrines of grace and impugn the sovereignty of God, to say nothing of denying the actual words of Scripture.

If man can save himself (Pelagianism), or regenerate himself (Finneyism), or contribute to his own salvation (Semi-Pelagianism), or initiate his salvation (Arminianism), then he cannot be totally depraved but is able to do spiritual good. This means that the guilt of Adam is not imputed to him and neither is Adam's sinful inability.

If he initiates his own salvation by effort, then he needs no calling from God. Neither is there any election of some to salvation since all men initiate their own salvation without reference to God's plan. If all men can be saved by their own works, or at least initiate it, then Christ did not die for the elect alone but must have atoned for everyone and God must give grace to everyone. If men do the initial works then there is no irresistible work of the Holy Spirit to initiate faith. Finally, if men are the basis of receiving salvation then there is the possibility that they can fail and fall away.

Thus all the doctrines of grace are ruined by any sort of Pelagianism since they deny the root doctrine of total depravity.

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Scripture quotations are from The New King James Version
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