

OBJECTIVE SOTERIOLOGY

I. THE PLAN OF SALVATION

The term "Plan of Salvation" has sometimes been identified with a particular scheme of soteriology, such as the Calvinistic or Arminian scheme. At other times the term has been identified with a particular ordering of the soteriological decrees of God, such as the Supralapsarian or infralapsarian order, and has then been viewed as equivalent to "Order of Decrees". Accordingly, we shall examine the concerns suggested by both uses of the term.

A. Schemes of Soteriology Compared and Contrasted

in his concise work, *The Plan of Salvation* Benjamin B. Warfield, an outstanding proponent of Calvinist theology, briefly surveys the varying views of the Plan of Salvation that have been held by those large groups who have claimed the name of Christian. The deepest cleft separating persons who call themselves Christians is that which divides between those that hold Naturalistic views and those that hold Supernaturalistic views. The issue here is: Do human beings save themselves, or does God save them? The deepest difference among Supernaturalists is that which separates the Sacerdotalists and the Evangelicals. The issue here concerns the immediacy of the saving operations of God: Does God save men only through the medium of instrumentalities established for the purpose (chiefly the Church and the Sacraments)? or does He save them by immediate operations of His grace upon their souls? Under the category "Sacerdotalists" Warfield places the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Anglican Church. Under the heading "Evangelicals" he places all of the churches called Protestant, including both Reformed and Lutheran, both Calvinistic and Arminian branches.

Yet there are important differences between the Evangelicals. The chief difference is that which distinguishes between the Universalists and the Particularists. The issue lies in the question of whether all the activities of God looking to salvation are directed indiscriminately to all men, yet some men only are saved; or whether what God does, looking to salvation, is both directed toward, and issues in, the salvation of some men only. The precise issue, in Warfield's words, is just whether the grace of God simply presents a general opportunity to all men to be saved; or whether it actually saves some men. Among those who hold to a universalistic Plan of Salvation, Warfield classes evangelical Lutheranism and evangelical Arminianism. This leaves us with those who hold to Particularism. However, even they have their differences. Some Particularists, desirous of preserving a universal, albeit hypothetical reference to the Atonement to all men, have been known as Hypothetical Redemptionists (or Amyraldianists), and are called by Warfield "Inconsistent Particularists." The remainder (of course) he calls "Consistent Particularists." Thus among those who claim the name of Christian, men must be either Naturalists or Supernaturalists; Supernaturalists, either Sacerdotalists or Evangelicals; Evangelicals, either Universalists or Particularists; and Particularists must be particularistic with respect to only some or with respect to all, of God's