

# Introduction

## A Doctrinal Tripping Hazard

### The Sad State of Christianity

There is an old song that goes, “Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?”<sup>1</sup> Originally, this was a lament of a individual about his mother. Today, it is a lament of this individual for the evangelical church of our day.

Observations on Church Planting, by Peter Wagner.

There are 195 million non-churched people in America, making America one of the four largest “unchurched” nations in the world.

In spite of the rise in mega-churches, no county in America has a greater church population than it did ten years ago.

During the last 10 years, combined communicant membership of all Protestant denominations declined by 9.5 per cent (4,498,242), while the national population increased by 11.4 percent (24,153,000).

Each year 3,500 to 4,000 churches close their doors forever; yet only as many as 1,500 new churches are started.

These statistics are alarming. If these trends continue, the church soon will be non-existent.

One author has suggested the church in North America lacks “spiritual purpose” and “missional vitality.”<sup>2</sup> I certainly agree! Under the heading of “lacking spiritual purpose,” I see additional reasons why the church stumbles under it’s heavy load of care.

A division exists between the generally accepted theory of how people are saved, and what is taught from the face (what you see) of Scripture on how people are saved. Most pastors teach the face of scripture which is correct. However, the theologians, in my opinion, have supported a doctrine which is in error. As a result, a doctrinal tripping hazard has crept into the church.

*This doctrinal tripping hazard is believing that godly men have no real influence on salvation.*

Proponents say, it is God alone that produces believing faith and salvation. Man has no part. This belief has come out of history and has become orthodox doctrine.

### Westminster Theology

This notion came from John Calvin, who lived in the 1500’s. Later, it was developed by others. In brief, it came as a result of a counter-argument to Arminianism. Arminianism said that belief and salvation came as a result of man choosing to be saved by his own effort. And, God’s part is to convict and persuade. Calvinists immediately countered with the idea that belief and salvation comes

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1. “What a Friend we have in Jesus,” Joseph M. Scriven, 1855, and Charles C. Converse, 1868.

2. “The Present Future,” Reggie McNeal, p.xv.

from God alone. Calvinistic type theology stuck in a watered down version and became orthodoxy to this day.

I believe the revealed truth is that belief and salvation come as a cooperative effort between God, godly men and natural men; not just God alone or not just by man alone with some help from God.

The foundation of Calvinism is the doctrine of “Unconditional Election.”<sup>3</sup>

It says that God has predestined some people to Heaven and foreordained many people to Hell. Since mankind has been so predestined and foreordained, they have been particularly designed, by God, such that each will fulfill his individual destiny to Heaven or to Hell. The number of souls going to Heaven or to Hell is so certain and definite that neither number can be increased or decreased.

If this is correct, it means I have no real influence on belief or salvation. And neither does anyone else. Yet we are admonished by Jesus to:

“go into the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and is baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”

(Mark 16:16)

This passage teaches that as godly men, Jesus wishes us to preach, and teach the gospel so men can have the opportunity to be saved.

If Westminster theology is correct, God is putting us through some kind of exercise. Telling us to preach, as if we have an influence on belief and salvation, and knowing all the time we have none. It means God is just using us to complete some game He is playing. This is not honest nor loving. Since God *is* honest *and* loving, this theology *must* be incorrect. If the vestiges of Westminster theology are true, look at the implications for the church today.

The pastor can preach, the congregation can witness, the missionaries can evangelize, but its all for nothing. Because at some unknown time, in some unknown venue, for some unknown reason,

God does something special. That special thing is secret, exclusive, done by Himself; which causes belief and salvation. On the other hand, God denies that same something special, to many other people, which destines them to Hell. This theory is very demotivating.

When people who are honestly following the admonishment to preach the gospel, sense that God saves by means not including them, they feel their effort is futile. And if this theory is correct, witnessing in whatever form, is in fact futile. It is no wonder there is lack of “spiritual purpose” and “missional vitality” in the church today.

Calvinism is what I call “God-Alone” theology. I will refer to it later, from time to time.

Someone may say, Oh no, that’s not the way it works. What really happens: the pastor preaches, the congregation witnesses, the missionaries evangelize, but it’s all for nothing *unless* God intervenes in a heart.

But if God intervenes in a heart, then man and God are working together. That’s not God working alone. This option is not possible under the theory of “Unconditional Election.”

God and man working together is taught on the face of scripture, which is the whole truth! I am calling this “Managed Cooperation Theology.” I will refer to it later.

But a proponent of God-Alone theology may argue, the way it actually works is: pastors preach, congregations witness, missionaries evangelize and God just gives the illusion of intervening. But He causes belief in whomever He wants, whenever He wants and however He wants.

Can’t say that. That argument causes God to appear dishonest (James 1:17). God does not lie or tell half-truths (Heb. 6:18).

Salvation by God alone theology, in my opinion, is 95 percent correct. Salvation by God alone has enough error, such that the church in North America, perhaps other places, is weak, ineffectual, and makes God nearly irrelevant in this generation. This needs to change.

The problem with God-Alone theology is it causes doubt. Just like in the Garden of Eden. It causes doubt in our role as christians; doubt in our commitment to do the work of God as defined on

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3. “The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination,” P. 84.

the face of scripture; doubt in the integrity of God, and doubt that the face of scripture is truth. These are serious issues.

The hint that man has no real influence on belief, causes doubt in our role as christians. Why should I make an effort to witness if it might not do any good anyway? Why should I witness to my brother, if God might not name him among the elect? If I, as a man, have no influence on belief and salvation of others, it makes no sense for me to bother. How do I, as a witness, handle the conflicting ideas of “whosoever will,” with “God only saves who He wills?” I don’t know what does God really means between these two ideas. Maybe God has some hidden reason for giving unclear direction and information. Did the translators make a mistake somewhere in how the Bible was interpreted? These doubts are real. This is the underlying message of God-Alone theology. Just what the devil wants us to believe. We see it in a declining christianity today.

The main problem is: many pastors half-believe the theologians, and half-believe the face of scripture. They have attended seminaries, which promote God-Alone theology. Then they get their own congregation, study for themselves, and begin to believe in Managed Cooperation between God and man. I imagine most pastors don’t even recognize the existence of these problems.

Since pastors are true to all their convictions, they end up preaching messages, at various times, with elements of both views. These messages lack singleness of purpose and a call to solid commitment.

For example: Let’s say this pastor, on this particular day, is influenced equally by his God-Alone theology, and his Managed Cooperation theology. He will preach on II Cor. 5: 20.

“Therefore, We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

This pastor can’t, in good conscience, implore his congregation to beg people to be reconciled to God. He’s not sure he should beg. After all, men are saved by God alone doing something, not pastors begging. So the pastor preaches a diluted

message of witness-to-your-friends. He does not include a call to repentance because only God convicts someone in His own time, for His own reasons.

Satan has succeeded in changing the message of urgency to a message of passivity; a message of personal responsibility to a message of; if its going to happen, God will do it. Never mind, that God might be convicting someone’s heart at that very service.

The poor pastor preaches his message and goes away believing he’s done a good job. He doesn’t realize he’s been deceived. He doesn’t know he’s been neutralized. Satan does this Sunday after Sunday, to pastor after pastor, in church after church. This doctrinal error has lead the way in producing church irrelevancy in North America. Here is the critical issue.

Calvinistic type theology exalts the sovereignty of God over the love of God. This means God’s majesty is perceived as more important to Him, than is His love to Him. This idea appears in their summation of the purpose for man, “The chief end of man is to glorify God.” On the surface, this sounds very lofty but underneath, it implies that God subordinates love to sovereignty. I believe the Scripture teaches that God’s sovereignty is subordinated to His love. This is readily seen in the torture and death of God’s Son on the cross by evil men.

## **Arminian Theology**

The nation is divided between Calvinist type theology and Arminian type theology. The Arminians believe that man accepts salvation by godly men’s and the natural man’s own efforts. That is not to say the Holy Spirit does not convict. Arminian’s believe the Holy Spirit convicts but the person makes the decision to act in faith. Arminianism is the same as Managed Cooperation Theology in that respect.

However, Arminian theology also exalts sovereignty over love. That means that God’s sovereignty is more important to Him, than is love to Him. This is seen in the ideas that obedience to Him is more important than devotion. That doing, is more important than being; what you do, is of

more value than who you are inside. I am sure these beliefs vary, depending on to whom you talk. But the point is Arminian theology needs to exalt love over sovereignty. This will allow people to see that loving the Lord your God, and loving your neighbor as yourself are the grandest values a christian can have.

## Needed Changes

The biggest change needed is to match the orthodox theory of how people are saved, and what the face of scripture says about how they are saved. These two must match in order for christians to have a single spiritual purpose and unified direction. It is only when we are all going the same direction, do we gain momentum. Momentum is required to have an impact on our society.

*What I am offering: that belief and salvation are a work of both God and man together.* Belief and salvation are not just a work of God alone. Belief and salvation are not just a work of man alone with some help from God.

Because belief and salvation are a work of both God and man together, man's role in the process, takes on an importance not felt in a hundred years. God is alive in our midst! We are serving by true faith once again.

The pastor can preach, the congregation can witness, the missionaries can evangelize, and we get results! The Holy Spirit will ignite holy passions for God like never before. People come to know the Lord, get baptized, get active, grow in holiness; everyone wants to be a part.

When people believe they are truly in partnership with God Almighty, in a work to help Him, in a work that is worthwhile for eternity, they feel honored and blessed to be a part of it

But God's role takes on an even bigger significance. When I commit to Him fully, He feeds back to me that He is there. I feel His presence. I feel His love. He works in peoples lives miraculously. We need to see God's face to turn the church from nearly dead to vibrantly alive.

We see this excitement about God and men working together in some present day mega churches. Certain godly men seem to have caught God's Spirit in their life to the degree that He has

blessed their ministry.

One pastor I have seen, exhorts the congregation to do great things for God, go to great lengths for God, and accept the great blessings of God. He calls sinners to repentance, people to be baptized, and the congregation to holiness. He obviously believes in God and man working together, and he tells them so. We need to bring back orthodox theology to match the scripture. Managed Cooperation Theology matches the scripture.

## Managed Cooperation Theology

Salvation is accomplished by God, godly men, and the Natural Man working together to bring each new soul to belief, faith and eventual maturity in love for God. God has provided salvation for everyone, but a Natural Man's thinking can only be changed by that individual opening himself to the possibility of God's truth not yet known. If he so opens himself; exposure to, belief of, and faith in, God's truth and ways are possible. This is how God and the natural, unregenerate man cooperate.

God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world was based upon His foreseeing that they would respond to His call.

Men constrained by the love of God are believers who are spiritual descendents of those taught by Jesus. These men cooperate with God to lead other men to Christ and love for God. As an unregenerate man allows himself to be exposed to God's love, mercy and grace, at some point; a paradigm shift in his thinking will take place. This shift is accomplished by the Holy Spirit convicting men of sin, righteousness and judgement.

His thinking transfers from believing his own way is right, to believing that God's way is right. His point-of-view changes. He begins to see life from a whole new perspective; God's perspective. This is called being "born-again."

This is when this individual passes from death to life. This is when this person inherits the promises of God. This is when this person begins to appreciate God. This is when this person begins to act in faith; that is, believing enough to act upon that belief. From there, faith either increases or

decreases; based on more relationship, or less relationship, with Jesus Christ.

Recognizing Christ's loving acts on the cross and God's mercy and grace, cause us to want to follow His direction. This is accomplished by perceiving the contrast between the goodness of God and the evil of man. It is this contrast which brings proper perspective. Those who will not open themselves to the possibility of God's existence and goodness never see the contrast between good and evil. They see the evil side of man but not the good side of God. Thus, they thwart the efforts of God and godly men to show them the worth of God.

The Holy Spirit's function is to convict men of sin, righteousness, and judgement. However, He cannot be perceived by an individual unless the person is cognizant that such a representative of God exists. Otherwise, the Spirit's voice sounds the same as thoughts generated by one's own brain.

God allows sin in the world in order for man to perceive the contrast between the goodness of God and the evil of man. This contrast will indicate to man his need for God's knowledge and character to manage his own life. The Holy Spirit will then have the tools to convict a man of his previous folly. The people who do not open themselves to the goodness of God, will not see the difference between good and evil. And, the Holy Spirit cannot show them a contrast which they do not have. Thus, they don't perceive the draw of the Holy Spirit.

He who has come to faith has the *promise* of salvation. The promise is conditional in the sense that one must have faith at the end of life, as well as, when one first believed. Faith is variable. The closer the relationship to Jesus, the greater the faith; the closer to Satan, the world or the flesh, the lesser the faith. If relationship with Jesus is neglected, conceivably one could cease to believe Jesus is God. One comes into the family of God by believing Jesus is God. One goes out by no longer believing Jesus is God.

Thus, the belief and salvation process requires the cooperation of God, the Father, and His plan; God the Son, His sacrifice and Earthly teaching; God the Holy Spirit, His teaching and convicting role; Godly men to evangelize, instruct and shep-

herd; and last but not least, the natural man who is cooperatively open, not closed, to hearing the truth of God. These are the ingredients to the recipe for true belief and salvation, and a more real christian-

ity. This is a warning. If orthodoxy does not change to match the scripture, the church, at large, will surely become "weaker and more heavy laden," until it is non-existent. However, I do *not* believe orthodoxy will fail christianity. I believe theologians will change.

## Changing Brings Revival

This is my vision for the future of Christianity in North America . . . if Godly men will embrace the idea of Managed Cooperation Theology.

The first thing that happens, godly individuals get excited about being a part of God's team. *They realize what they are doing is important to God; themselves, and people to whom they minister.* This is not just going to church and warming a pew. Excited people breed more excited people. As a result of godly people's faith, you will begin to see God's hand appear at various times in various places.

Pastors will start calling for people to repent from their sins because pastor now realizes someone may open their heart to the gospel, and the Holy Spirit may convict that person of his sin. And he, pastor, needs to be ready to take advantage of that tender heart. This may even happen while pastor is entreating them to repent.

By faith, pastors will teach congregations that God will do more than we ask or think; because they realize *He* wants them to be successful, because *He* gets the benefit and the glory! That is, another soul to appreciate and love Him; another soul to seek and save others.

Results are immanent because God and pastor are working for the same goal. Pastor is preaching, *believing* that the Holy Spirit *is* moving in the congregation. Not that the Holy Spirit might move.

Believing the Holy Spirit *might* move is not faith at all. God does not bless (give results for) anything but true faith. Because, what is not of faith, is sin (Rom. 14:23).

The second level is churches growing; not staying the same size or shrinking. It is the desire to, and hope of, seeing God's hand that motivates. Seeing God's hand in our lives and churches, provides enthusiasm for spiritual thoughts, action, habits and destinies.

The third level is bigger churches and greater ministry. Who knows, maybe mega churches will be common in *all* cities of North America in not-to-many years.

The remainder of this book is dedicated to providing details of how and why Managed Cooperation theology is Biblical truth.

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