

Survey of Theology 5.

The Doctrine of Salvation

Outline

Salvation and Christ

What Are We Saved From, Saved For?

How Are We Saved?

When Are We Saved?

Who Is Saved?

Salvation and Christ

“Salvation”

- Could be defined as “a benefit conferred upon or achieved by its members”
- many religions / institutions / philosophies offer such benefits (“salvation”). However the nature of the benefit and how it is achieved varies enormously.
 - e.g., “Salvation” in Buddhism is quite different than “salvation” in Christianity
- important to honor and respect these differences

Salvation and Christ

The Christian Doctrine of **Salvation** was not rigorously defined in the early church; and there is diversity in views on:

- what we are saved from
- what we are saved for
- how we are saved
- who is saved

Two distinctive features in Christian salvation are agreed upon:

1. Salvation is grounded in the life, death, resurrection of Jesus Christ
2. Jesus Christ provides a model or paradigm for the redeemed life

Salvation and Christ

Salvation is grounded in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ

Two different views on this “grounding:”

- 1. Jesus’ life and death were *illustrative*.
They *illustrated / showed / proved* to us the saving will of God that had been present for eternity
- 2. Jesus’ life and death were *constitutive*.
Jesus’ life and death *caused something new* to arise that made salvation possible.
Jesus’ life and death *achieved something new*, without which salvation would not be possible

Salvation and Christ

Jesus provides a model or paradigm for the redeemed life

Two ways Jesus provides the model for redeemed life:

1. Believer takes responsibility to bring his or her life into line with Christ
 - Thomas a Kempis Imitation of Christ
2. The Holy Spirit works in us and “conforms” our lives to Christ

What Are We Saved From, Saved For?

We are *saved from* our human deficiencies and unmet needs. We are *saved for* a life in which these deficiencies are overcome

1. “Vertical” deficiencies

- our broken relationship with God caused by sin

2 “Horizontal” deficiencies

- the lack of harmony in society
- brokenness in our personal relationships with other persons
- our inner deficiencies and “demons” that hold us back from “authentic life”

What Are We Saved From, Saved For?

Our Broken Relationship with God

Sin causes a broken relationship with God.

“How do I find a gracious God?” (Martin Luther). How can sinners (all of us) ever be accepted by a Holy God?

Salvation

- is liberation from condemnation because of our sins so we can someday stand in righteousness before God.
- involves our **justification** and **sanctification**.

What Are We Saved From, Saved For?

Our Broken Relationship with God

Some terminology (Protestant):

Justification

- individual “declared just” (the broken relationship with God restored)
- God active, human being passive:
“Justification is by faith alone”

Sanctification

- individual “making just”
- the growth in holiness by a human being restored to God through justification
- both human being and God active

What Are We Saved From, Saved For? Our Broken Relationship with God

Some terminology (Roman Catholic):

Objective Justification = equivalent to
Protestant “Justification” = “declared
just”

Subjective Justification = equivalent to
Protestant “Sanctification” = “making
just”

Sanctifying Grace = a combined process of
objective and subjective justification

What Are We Saved From, Saved For? Our Broken Relationship with God

“Protestants speak of a declaration of justice and Catholics of a making just. But Protestants speak of a declaring just which includes a making just; and Catholics of a making just which supposes a declaring just. Is it not time to stop arguing about imaginary differences?”

- Hans Küng

What Are We Saved From, Saved For? Lack of Harmony in Society

Liberation Theology

Basic problem of society: oppression and exploitation of powerless classes by the powerful. **Salvation** is liberation from this oppression

Biblical basis for liberation theology:

- 1. God has sided with exploited peoples through the history of salvation (the Hebrews oppressed by the Pharaoh)
- 2. Jesus in his ministry expressed a preferential option for the poor

What Are We Saved From, Saved For? Lack of Harmony in Society

Liberation Theology

Tenets:

- God came to earth and entered the human struggle through the Incarnation
- God is thus active in the world. God is involved with the poor in their struggle
- God's will for an equalizing justice means that in an unjust world, God works in an unequal manner, favoring the poor in compensation
- those who believe in God must utilize all means (political action, revolution) possible to work for salvation from oppression

What Are We Saved From, Saved For? Inauthentic Life

Existential Theology

Salvation is liberation from the forces that deprive us of *authentic existence*
(Bultmann, Tillich)

terms:

Authentic Existence: to be as we are meant to be, to live to fulfill our human potential

Inauthentic Existence: to fail to live in a manner that allows us to fulfill (as much as possible) what we are meant to be

What Are We Saved From, Saved For? Inauthentic Life

Bultmann:

Christian Inauthentic Life. Two human tendencies:

1. A self-orientation, a desire for self-aggrandizement that takes precedence over:
 - love for others
 - knowing, telling, honoring the truth
2. Desire for autonomy. Desire for security by one's own efforts

A Christian must abandon quest for tangible realities, transitory objects.

How Are We Saved?

How does/did Jesus' life, death, and resurrection save us? What are the mechanisms by which the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, and/or the Resurrection makes our salvation possible?

Some views (not mutually exclusive):

Jesus' Life and Death Constitutive:

1. Cross as a Sacrifice
2. Cross as Victory
3. Cross and Forgiveness
4. Incarnation and Deification

Jesus' Life and Death Illustrative:

5. Cross as Moral Example

How Are We Saved?

Cross as Sacrifice

In dying on the cross, Christ was both victim and priest, offering himself to the Father as the Passover sacrifice

Purpose of Christ's sacrifice was to appease the Father for the sins of humanity, thus making our salvation possible.

Jesus' single sacrifice sufficed, was "perfect" because Jesus was divine as well as human, making the "magnitude" of his sacrifice far greater than that of any ordinary human being

How Are We Saved?

Cross as Sacrifice

Problems / Questions

- What does a sacrifice do for God? Why would God want a “sacrifice” before God could be merciful to sinners? How could God’s mercy be dependant on a sacrifice?

Horace Bushnell (1866):

- Christ’s sacrifice awakens our sense of guilt and shows us God suffers because of our sins (*illustrative* dimension)
- Jesus’ death both affected / moved / changed God as well as expressed God (*constitutive* dimension)

How Are We Saved?

Cross as Victory

Christ the Victor (*Christus victor*)

Through his Crucifixion and Resurrection,
Jesus achieved a lasting victory over sin,
death and Satan

How Are We Saved?

Cross as Victory

Classic Theory of How the Victory was Won

(Origen, Gregory the Great):

- The devil had gotten rights over fallen humanity.
God had to respect those rights
- The devil's right could only be forfeited if the devil exceeded his authority
- God devised a plan to trick the devil in order to get him to unknowingly exceed his authority:
 - Jesus was sent into the world, divine and sinless (the "hook"), but in the form of a sinful human being ("the bait")
 - The devil took the "bait" and tried to claim authority over Jesus, discovering too late the "hook" – that Jesus was also divine and sinless. Thus the devil exceeded his authority

How Are We Saved?

Cross as Victory

Problems (St. Anselm):

- How could the devil ever get “rights” over fallen humanity, and why would God be under any obligation to respect them?
- God is righteous and would never deceive, not even the devil

How Are We Saved?

Cross and Forgiveness

Anselm and Thomas Aquinas:

- God acts completely according to the principles of *justice* in humanity's redemption
- God's sense of justice demands some *satisfaction* or *penance* be done for the disobedience of humanity before humanity's sin are forgiven

How Are We Saved?

Cross and Forgiveness

Jesus' death allows the forgiveness of sins because:

1. Jesus **substitutes** for us on the cross.
God allows Jesus to stand in our place and take our guilt upon himself.
2. Jesus is the covenant **representative** for humanity. By his obedience on the cross, he wins the benefit of forgiveness for those he represents.
3. Through faith, believers **participate** in the risen Christ (Paul: "in Christ"), and thereby share the benefits won by Jesus.

How Are We Saved?

Cross and Forgiveness

Problems:

- in what sense is it moral or “just” for one human being to bear the penalties due to another?
- why does God need “satisfaction” or penance for sins? There surely cannot be some “law of justice” that is higher than God that demands each sin be counterbalanced by a proportionate penance (especially a penance provided by a innocent substitute!)

How Are We Saved?

Incarnation and Deification

“God become human, in order that humans might become God.”

- Athanasius

Salvation in Orthodox Church: the broken relationship between individuals and God is restored so that human beings can *participate in* the uncreated energy of God (“deification”)

How Are We Saved?

Incarnation and Deification

“Deification” possible because:

- in the Incarnation:
 - Jesus did not only become an individual human being, but:
 - the Godhead, divinity itself took on *general* human nature
- this new divinized human nature heals the gap between human beings and their Creator
 - Jesus (the “new Adam”) is the first example of divinized humanity, of our ultimate vocation

How Are We Saved?

Incarnation and Deification

“It was necessary that the voluntary humiliation, the redemptive self-emptying (*kenosis*) of the Son of God should take place, so that fallen men might accomplish their vocation of *theosis*, the deification of created beings by uncreated grace.”

- Vladimir Lossky, 1953

How Are We Saved?

Cross as Moral Example

The incarnation, the life and death of Jesus *illustrates* God's love for humanity and *moves us* to love of God. This love is what saves us.

How Are We Saved?

Cross as Moral Example

Peter Abelard:

“the purpose and cause of the incarnation was that Christ might illuminate the world by his wisdom, and excite it to love of himself”

“our redemption through the suffering of Christ is that deeper love within us which not only frees us from slavery to sin, but also secures for us the true liberty of the children of God, in order that we might do all things out of love rather than out of fear. . .”

How Are We Saved?

Cross as Moral Example

After the Enlightenment, this view

“expanded” to:

- Christ the *moral ideal*
 - taught by his words
 - illustrated by his life and death
 - the most important aspect of this moral ideal was his love for others
- Taking to heart and trying to live Christ's moral ideal is all we need to be saved

When Are We Saved?

Is our salvation:

- a single event at the beginning of our Christian life (“I am saved”)?
- a process continuing throughout Christian life (“I am being saved”)?
- a future event (“I will be saved”)?

When Are We Saved?

Question in part arises from the attempt to shoehorn **justification, sanctification** and our **final salvation** into a past-present-future framework, and then to emphasize one part of the process:

Processes of Salvation:

1. **Justification** (*past* event)
2. **Sanctification** (*present* event, dependent upon the past event of justification)
3. **Final Salvation** (*future* event, dependent upon, anticipated and partially experienced in the past events of justification and sanctification)

When Are We Saved?

However, the processes of salvation are complex in their chronology:

- **Justification** has future and a past
(Romans 2:13, 8:33, Galatians 5:4-5)
- **Sanctification** has a past (1 Cor. 6:11) and a future (1 Thess. 5:23)

“Christian understanding of salvation presupposes that something *has* happened, that something *is now happening*, and that something *will still happen* to believers.”

- McGrath

Who Will Be Saved?

Three views:

1. Universalism – *All will be saved*
2. *Only believers will be saved*
3. Particular Redemption – *Only the elect will be saved.*

Who Will Be Saved?

Universalism

Origen:

- The idea that God and Satan would rule over respective kingdoms for all eternity a flawed *dualism*
- The final redeemed version of creation cannot include a hell or kingdom of Satan. In the end, all of creation must be restored to God

Who Will Be Saved?

Universalism

John A. T. Robinson (radical English theologian 1960's):

- “May we not imagine a love so strong that ultimately no one will be able to retrain himself from free and grateful surrender?”
- “In a universe of love there can be no heaven which tolerates a chamber of horrors.”

Who Will Be Saved?

Only Believers Will Be Saved

Augustine distanced himself from Origen, stressed faith is a precondition for salvation

Biblical passages which say that God wishes all to be saved refer to *all kinds of people*, **not** *all people* (Augustine and Calvin)

Who Will Be Saved?

Only Believers Will Be Saved

Question: what kind of belief? what kind of faith is sufficient?

John Wesley: faith is needed for one to be saved, but not necessarily a fully Christian faith

C. S. Lewis: a commitment to the pursuit of goodness and truth a sufficient faith

Who Will Be Saved?

Only Believers Will Be Saved

Roman Catholic Views Since Vatican II:

- Vatican II: God's grace *is found in nature* and hence is available to all religions
- Vatican II: describes three groups of the "People of God:"
 1. Catholics, "incorporated" into the church
 2. Non-Catholics Christians, "linked" to the church
 3. Non-Christians, "related" to the church

Who Will Be Saved?

Only Believers Will Be Saved

Roman Catholic Views Since Vatican II:

People of God = the Church. Salvation is found only in the church, but “the church” is more than the visible institutional Catholic church

Wherever there is salvation, there the church is also

- Yves Congar

Who Will Be Saved?

Only Elect Will Be Saved

Basis is the Reformed doctrine of
predestination

Problem:

- Jesus cannot have died in vain
- Yet some will not accept God and will not be saved – meaning that Jesus would have died in vain for them

Solution:

- Jesus did not die for all people, but died only for the predestined *elect*
- Thus Jesus did not die in vain

Primary References

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