

a. Socinianism

The idea was that of a practical moral influence theory somewhat in the tradition of Abelard. The view was propagated by Sozzini and Fausto..the former dying about 1562 and the latter about 1604. The atonement had no substitutionary value since Christ was only a man...albeit a very special man and the revelation of God to man. What Christ accomplished was a teaching force for life. The view was not well received and eventually the movement was severely persecuted. It is the moral forerunner of modern unitarianism and in this sense combines the reformational period ideas of Sozzini with the early church concepts of Sabellius.

b. Governmental Idea

Advanced largely by Hugo Grotius, more famed as a lawyer and diplomat, the idea is that God, as governor, could suspend the law of sin and death as He willed. Therefore the death of Christ serves as a penal example and shows the greatness of God's forgiving power. As Walker notes (History of the Christian Church) in some ways the views of Grotius are attractive but miss the important concept that somehow Christ died for us...not just as a lesson to us. Grotius, incidentally, was a victim of the Dutch theological wars...spent a lot of his time trying to unite Protestant opinion, and chiefly was ill thought of for his work. As mentioned, he is better known outside the church for his jurisprudence than inside the body for his prudence.

c. Arminianism

As there are many shades of Arminianism, it is only a general concept that we make at this point. While Arminians do not advance an independent atonement view, they tend to make the atonement look incomplete by jeopardizing its accomplishment through the insistence on human perfection. The nature of this gap in theology is generally neither agreed on nor accepted by Arminian theologians...which reminds us that consistency is a jewel not owned by many.

3. The order of salvation

The arrangement of the steps that lead to a saving knowledge is one of those almost profitless arguments (I think) but one that recurs constantly. The reformers agreed broadly that salvation was a matter of justification by faith. This doctrine had been neglected due to the mediaeval anthropological position and the concept of supernatural righteousness. It was graphically recovered by Luther and Calvin, among others, not on a philosophical basis but on the concepts of exegesis and the study of the Word of God. But having taken this basic position, the reformers differed largely in how the actual justification was accomplished. Berkhof, History of Doctrines helps us summarize the differing views in outlining the following steps. (p. 222, etc)

a. The Lutheran community, particularly after Luther, say an order of salvation of these seven steps: