

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

**A Study of Soteriology: A Commentary, Course, and Conclusion of Brown's Creek Baptist
Church's Soteriological Beliefs**

Submitted to the faculty
In fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of
the Doctor of Ministry Degree

Department of Christian Leadership and Church Ministries

by

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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This thesis identifies a church's lack of theological awareness of biblical soteriology, investigates the literature for solutions to the ministerial problem, implements the review of literature into a course with curriculum, and the influences on the congregation's beliefs. The church was a hodgepodge of soteriological beliefs. More specifically, the congregants purported to believe in Calvinism, Arminianism, and Semi-Pelagianism but could not accurately define, adequately describe, or appropriately defend said beliefs. A review of literature led this student to be selective of the soteriological literature known to exist. Simply, the ministerial problem was not because of a lack of literature but because of a lack of application. Surveying the selected literature, this student found several common themes associated with the above soteriological schools. These themes included the historical positions, the theological precepts, the biblical precedents, the exegetical problems, and the contemporary perspectives. These themes, following an exegetical study of Romans 9 for the theological foundation and finding known examples where courses were effective at distributing the information for the theoretical foundation, were implemented with curriculum in a classroom. The course, spanning seven days for an hour each day, presented the review of literature using the themes to distinguish the days. A survey and two identical questionnaires, one given before the course and one given after the course, were used to collect the quantitative and qualitative data. This data revealed that the course was effective at confirming, challenging, and changing the congregation's soteriological beliefs by bringing theological awareness to biblical soteriology.

Key Words: Soteriology, Justification, Synergism, Monergism, Calvinism, Arminianism, Semi-Pelagianism.

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Abbreviations

DMIN *Doctor of Ministry*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The purpose of chapter one is to introduce the ministry context, reveal the ministerial problem which happens to be Brown's Creek Baptist Church's understanding of soteriology, and present the proposed solution to the problem which is synonymous with the purpose of this DMIN project. The desirable outcome and aim of this project will be its thesis statement. Admittedly, there are always limitations, those things outside this student's control, and delimitations, those things within this student's control, which will be disclosed and discussed. Furthermore, this student's basic assumptions for this DMIN project will be given so that the aim and direction will not be lost. For convenience, definitions will also be provided to limit any confusion. For example, Calvinism and Arminianism will be defined and discussed in terms of Reformed soteriology and Free Will soteriology respectively. In short, as a first-time senior pastor at the oldest church in Union South Carolina, this DMIN student hoped to challenge, correct, or confirm the congregation's soteriological beliefs.

Ministry Context

To best understand the ministry context, the historical, social, geographical, religious, political, and economic elements that shape Brown's Creek Baptist Church must be explored. Indeed, any church mirrors itself with the location it presides (cf. Paul's epistles). Not surprisingly, Brown's Creek Baptist Church owes its homage and history to the historical-cultural context of Union County. Thus, it is imperative to include the census, county, and community of Union when speaking about one of its churches.

The Census of Union

Union County is situated between two major cities in South Carolina, Spartanburg to the north and Columbia to the south. Union County is located just east of Interstate 26 with a land mass of 514 square miles. According to the United States Census Bureau, Union County has an estimated population of 27,316 (2019).¹ Of the 27,316 people living in Union County, the majority of the population is Caucasian (65.4%), female (52.7%), and working class (18-65; 58.2%). Nonetheless, Union County is considered diverse. African Americans make up 32% of the population and persons under eighteen or over sixty-five make up 41.8% of the population.

Additionally, the census reveals that since 2010, Union County has seen an exodus of those eighteen to sixty-five years of age. That is, nearly 2,000 of the working population have left, down an estimated 6% from the census taken in 2010. As a result, those under the age of five comprise only 5.7% of the population. In other words, Union County is not getting younger. Rather, Union County is getting older with those under eighteen totaling just 21.2% of the population. With 78.8% of the population older than eighteen and less than 6% under the age of five, the data suggests that Union County is in a steady decline.

Two significant reasons appear to explain the decline from the data. First, the median household income in Union County is \$41,186. When compared to the national average which reached close to \$64,000 in 2019, Union County is not a wealthy economy. Simply, people are leaving for better opportunities and living conditions. Second, Union County's labor force is 56.7% of its estimated population. That is, nearly half of the population is unemployed or unable to work. With 41.8% of the population restricted or retired from working, the data suggests a lack of jobs. In fact, the data reveals that those working (56.7%) commute approximately thirty

¹United States Census Bureau, "2019 Census of Union County South Carolina," accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/unioncountysouthcarolina/INC110219>.

minutes to their jobs (26.9%). In other words, Union County workers are traveling to Spartanburg for employment.²

The County of Union

Census data aside, the county of Union has a rich history. According to Allen Charles, local historian and professor at the University of South Carolina Union, Union County has strived and struggled during its brief existence. Established in 1785, Union County was named after Union Church built by its first settlers from Virginia and Pennsylvania. Predominately Presbyterian, the settlers were attracted to Union County because of its agricultural capabilities, cotton and soybean being the two primary commodities. Like in much of the south, slavery was common practice before 1860. Rich bureaucrats soon populated Union County with aspirations of getting richer. To be sure, cotton was and still is a highly sought after commodity. However, the Civil War brought the growth and development of Union County to a halt. It would be nearly thirty years before Union County would see growth once again.

Thirty years after the Civil War, Union County experienced an industrial boom. With slavery outlawed and condemned, sharecropping and tenant farming served as alternative means of providing a consistent labor force. However, influenced by the Industrial Revolution, manufacturing introduced to the area would soon bring stability and social economic success for years to come. Beginning in 1894, textile mills quickly populated Union County. By the 1900s, the textile industry was the primary means of income. Mill villages, with their own schools and churches, separated Union County into small individual communities. Peace and prosperity permeated Union County once more like it did shortly after its birth.

²United States Census Bureau, "2019 Census of Union County South Carolina," accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/unioncountysouthcarolina/INC110219>.

Figure 1.³

THE UNION BILLIONAIRES CLUB. Noted as the big four on the back of the postcard, the men are, from left to right, (seated) John Fant and Thomas Cary Duncan; (standing) two unidentified but one may be a Nicholson. Born in Santuc in 1857, John Fant was the founder of the Monarch Mill. Thomas Cary Duncan was a Union industrialist heavily involved in local business endeavors. He was born on July 5, 1862, and he died on July 9, 1928. He financed the first Union cotton mill in 1893. He also owned the Union and Buffalo Cotton Mills and was responsible for the construction of the BUC Railroad and the Neal Shoals hydroelectric plant. He was the mayor of Union from 1910 to 1918 and elected to the state senate for a term spanning from 1919 to 1925. Duncan lived with his family, including five children, at the Merridun Mansion. Duncan's two sons died at an early age, and his three daughters were named Medora, Louisa, and Fannie.

Unfortunately, the Great Depression and two world wars brought difficulties to the area. Much of the labor force joined the American war effort while women and children struggled to support their families. After World War II, Union County never regained its bolstering economy. In fact, starting in the 1980s, textile mills began shutting down and moving their operations

³Peter Triggiani and Amber Jackson, *Images of America: Union Country* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2015), 40.

overseas. The last mill shut down in the mid-2000s, leaving Union County seeking a new identity and industry. A few manufacturers have recently come to the area, but nothing compared to the textile mills of the 1900s.⁴

The Community of Union

The community of Union County can be described according to its religious, political, and economic affiliation. Mentioned above, the first settlers were primarily Presbyterian. Hence, Union County was birthed from the Protestant faith. However, the agricultural appeal and the manufacturing attractiveness of Union County soon brought different ideologies and religions to the area. Catholicism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness, and particularly Masonry arose during the industrial boom and have maintained a steady presence to this day. Specifically, male residents of Union County hold their affiliation with the Masonry cult in high regard. According to Dr. Ron Rhodes, Dallas Theological Seminary, the Freemasonry belief in a higher being is often considered synonymous with the God of Christianity.⁵ Indeed, there are currently five masonic lodges in Union County, two of which share property with local Baptist churches (Kelton and Buffalo). Thus, it is not uncommon today for a male resident of Union County to be both a mason and a member of a Baptist church. Nonetheless, most residents of Union County consider themselves Southern Baptist. In fact, twenty-nine Southern Baptist churches are located in Union County. The Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Lutheran each have one church in the area.

Politically, the residents of Union County support the Democratic Party. Admittedly, the Republican Party has its supporters, more now than ever before. Historically, however, Union

⁴Allen D. Charles, *The Narrative History of Union Country South Carolina*, 4th ed. (Spartanburg: Reprint Company Publishers, 2014), 1–574.

⁵Ron Rhodes, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Masons* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2001), 75.

County is considered a blue community. The diversity of the community is the primary reason why but for separate reasons. Simply, the African American community is considered new Democrats (post-segregation) whereas the Caucasian community consider themselves old Democrats (pre-segregation). Noteworthy, during the Reconstruction (1865–1877), the Northern white settlers (later called “carpetbaggers” by native whites) and the native freed slaves joined an alliance that was quickly met with resistance from the native white community. Why? Because the alliance’s proposed political changes (raising taxes to incorporate Northern ideals) meant destroying Southern heritage. Today, the Ku Klux Klan is considered a domestic terrorist organization. During Reconstruction, the Ku Klux Klan was considered an enforcement agency to protect Southern ideals.⁶ Ironically, approximately 150 years later, political changes (removal of the Confederate flag and statues from the state capitol in Columbia, SC) was met with resistance by those wishing to protect Southern history. Not surprisingly, the Ku Klux Klan once again resurfaced during the protests at the capitol.⁷ As mentioned above, Union County is an aging community. Many of the residents were born, raised, and lived during the 1960s and 1970s. Unfortunately, racial tensions still persist today. To be sure, African Americans and Caucasians rarely worship together. Rather, both communities have separate churches for their respective race and ethnicity.

Economically, Union County is currently considered a bedroom community. Following the demise of the textile mills, competition for jobs have increased. As a result, residents of Union County hold their employment in high esteem. Retirees reminisce of the times when

⁶Charles, *The Narrative History of Union*, 230–33.

⁷Jeremy Borden, “KKK met with skirmishes at rally to protest Confederate flag removal,” *Washington Post*, July 18, 2015, accessed June 18, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/kkk-protests-after-swift-reckoning-for-confederate-flag-in-the-south/2015/07/18/a2407fae-2d85-11e5-a5ea-cf74396e59ec_story.html.

textile mills dominated the area. Those privileged to have worked for a local mill are revered and considered local royalty. In fact, once a year there is a banquet for former Milliken plant (textile) workers. Those working at the few new manufacturing plants are considered blessed. That is, with employment scarce, those privileged with the opportunity to live and work in Union County are respected and deemed relevant in the community. Consequently, seniority and status are quality traits for the working class. Noteworthy, Union Country flourished when the ruling classes (the mediator, the merchant, and the planter) enjoyed economic success. The Sims family—during the Early Republic—and the Fant/Duncan families (see above)—during the Industrial Revolution—acted as the mediator during their respective eras – intermediaries for the relations between the merchants and planters.⁸ More recently, the mediator was Roger Milliken, who acquired and operated the textiles mills until their closures. Without the mediator, the merchants look elsewhere for their product and the planters are left eyeing new professions. In sum, the planters (the working class) in Union Country have suffered but survived, exchanging cotton mills for car manufacturing—living in Union but laboring in the Upstate of South Carolina.

The Church of Union

The census data, county history, and community description of Union County are important in understanding this student pastor's current ministry context. Established in 1806, Brown's Creek Baptist Church is considered the oldest church in Union County. Simply, the church has stood the test of time. In fact, Brown's Creek Baptist Church's history mirrors that of Union County which was established in 1785. The original church (1806–1969) replaced the old

⁸Len Eisele, "Mediator, Merchant, and Planter: The Hybrid Ruling Class of Union County, South Carolina in the Early Republic" (B.S. Thesis, Northern Illinois University, 2012), 3–9, accessed June 19, 2021, <http://commons.lib.niu.edu/bitstream/handle/10843/17580/Eisele%20Leonard%2060103.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

Union Church from which the county derived its name. The present church was built in 1970. Its original members were slave owners, agricultural enthusiasts in search of wealth and prosperity. The church strived during the Industrial Revolution and survived the Great Depression, two world wars, and the recent economic decline due to the textile mills departure from the area. Unfortunately, the issue of race, though not championed, remains prevalent. In short, the congregation is comprised of old democrats. Nonetheless, one could argue that Brown's Creek Baptist Church is a proud church, one that owns its accomplishments but disowns its failures.

Predominately Caucasian, the majority of Brown's Creek Baptist Church's membership is elderly (65+). Most are retirees from Milliken Textile and reminisce of the past. As a result, duty and devotion are the qualities they expect from their pastor. Moreover, the past reminds them of what used to be. In other words, despite the economic downturn, their primary hope is that Brown's Creek Baptist Church returns to or exceeds its former glory. Unfortunately, two problems emerge. First, pastors have been called based on their duty and devotion rather than doctrine. Admittedly, all the past pastors have been Southern Baptist. However, the Baptist Faith and Message is vague in terms of its soteriology.⁹ That is, Calvinism, Arminianism, and some sort of a hybrid can be championed without conspiracy. Consequently, the church, as it stands today, is a hodgepodge of soteriological beliefs. Second, spiritual growth is not synonymous with numerical growth. Despite being Southern Baptist, the church's giving to its denomination's cooperative program is neither evangelism nor missions proper. Yet, the church prides itself on giving rather than sharing the gospel. The common understanding is that more members mean more money which leads to more missions. To put it another way, membership is synonymous with discipleship—giving synonymous with growth.

⁹Southern Baptist Convention, *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, accessed June 19, 2021, <https://bfm.sbc.net>.

Brown's Creek Baptist Church's fascination with numerical growth and the church's desire for its former glory has caused spiritual decline. Simply, programs have replaced the pulpit. Brown's Creek Baptist Church has had numerous pastors over its history, thirty to be exact. Furthermore, only two pastors have retired from the church and the longest tenure pastor served fifteen years. In other words, Brown's Creek Baptist Church has been a revolving door for pastors to enter and exit the church and community. Consequently, a lack of pastoral consistency and lackluster pulpit content have been detrimental to the church. In short, the congregation has remained immature, physically old (65+) but spiritual babes. Admittedly, the church desires the preaching of God's Word. However, the congregation has been consistently indoctrinated then abandoned. Currently immature and constantly indoctrinated, the congregation of Brown's Creek Baptist Church has become hardened, headstrong, and chiefly hesitant to be shepherded. The thought among many is that it is better to remain confident than routinely challenged by someone who is likely to leave. Thus, programs and traditions have trumped pastoral training. Ministry has been reduced to actively participating in church programs.

While the congregation's hope is numerical growth, this student pastor's plan is to grow them spiritually. This student pastor is the most educated of the past pastors. Accordingly, his desire is to take the church into the depth and breadth of Scripture. The first task is to confront, correct, and champion the congregation's soteriological beliefs. The task is daunting but deserving of the flock and the chief shepherd. Thus, it is imperative that this student pastor carefully navigate his ministry context, acknowledging that Brown's Creek Baptist Church has a proud, predominately older, and program-oriented congregation. Currently, the church is being exposed to exegetical preaching, having been taught predominately by topical preaching for at

least the last fifteen years. It is the desire of this student pastor that the church become familiar with God's intended meaning and message rather than a self-motivated agenda. Simply, it is his belief that one's orthodoxy influences one's orthopraxy. Noteworthy, Brown's Creek Baptist Church is this student pastor's first senior pastorate. Having been here since September 2020, the congregation and its current pastor are still in the process of becoming familiar with each other. Nevertheless, the congregation of 100–150 has his full attention despite their assumption of him leaving sometime in the future.

Problem Presented

The problem, identified by this author through interaction with church members, was that the congregation at Brown's Creek Baptist Church lacked a theological understanding of biblical soteriology. The doctrine of salvation is concerned with the gospel and the culmination of God's redemptive history. Christ is the "good news" and His church is the recipient of God's grace. In short, soteriology is the center of Christian theology and crux of Scripture. Indeed, John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, both of The Master's Seminary in California, note, that soteriology is the "pinnacle of Christian theology."¹⁰ Unfortunately, for the past fifteen years, perhaps more, this congregation has been subjected to topical preaching—teaching that could distort the meaning of Scripture by disregarding its historical-cultural and literary context for the purpose of driving a pastor's agenda. Admittedly, topical preaching is a valid approach to preaching if the various passages are understood in context and when the various passages are explained and applied within their respective contexts. According to Scott Duvall and Daniel Hays, graduates of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and professors of New Testament and Old Testament at Ouachita Baptist University respectively, "Far too often topical

¹⁰John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Biblical Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017), 485.

preaching distorts the meaning of Scripture by disregarding the literary context.”¹¹ Indeed, this is what has occurred at Brown’s Creek Baptist Church for years. Fortunately, the congregation is familiar with the basic truths of the gospel. However, the church lacks a solid biblical foundation for its faith. To be sure, tradition has trumped truth, Calvinism is synonymous with cancer, Arminianism is not acknowledged, and Semi-Pelagianism is prevalent. A DMIN student with a cognate in Biblical Studies, this student and pastor hoped to bring biblical awareness and attention to his congregation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN project was to provide a course for Brown’s Creek Baptist Church that would bring biblical attention and awareness to soteriology. Admittedly, a plethora of scholarly and biblical literature already exists, that this student and pastor was aware, for a course to be devised. Indeed, much of the literature on soteriology is purely theoretical, found primarily in biblical commentaries, scholarly journals, academic and historical Christian books. Theoretical literature is meant to saturate the head and heart which stimulates the hands. Mentioned above, one’s orthodoxy (belief) drives his or her orthopraxy (behavior). Unfortunately, the “hands” had been largely impaired. That is, practically speaking, the theoretical literature had been largely ignored and interpreted in favor of pastoral ideologies. True, theoretical literature is costly and chiefly biased. With the closest theological library (Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary) being an hour away, the cost and confidence in the content of the literature were major factors that contributed to the ministerial problem. Furthermore, the current literature available was not ministry specific. Simply, a single literature did not exist that adequately or absolutely dealt with Brown’s Creek Baptist Church’s

¹¹J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Journey into God’s Word: Your Guide to Understanding and Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 69.

soteriological makeup. With cost, content, and context being problematic, it was imperative that such a course existed to bridge the gap between the head and heart to the hands. It was this student and pastor's agenda to create a course that was impactful while being informative. Surveys and questionnaires were developed, scholarly literature was disclosed and debated, and the Scripture was discussed. In sum, this course was meant to reveal the Author of Scripture, His message, and His intended meaning.

Basic Assumptions

Assumptions are those things this student pastor hoped to be true regarding the study or the outcome of the research project. The general assumption was that this project would challenge, correct, or confirm the soteriological beliefs of Brown's Creek Baptist Church's congregation. This, of course, meant several specific assumptions needed to apply. First, the assumption was that the course would impact and influence change. That is, God would use this opportunity to equip and encourage the saints. It is the Word of God and the Spirit of God, working through the people of God, which causes transformation into the image and likeness of the Son of God to occur.¹² Second, this student pastor assumed honest participation from the congregants. Accuracy of action research is dependent on those participating in the research. Lastly, the assumption was that the product of the sum be equal to the whole. In other words, it was assumed that those participating in the research represented the congregation's general beliefs. Mentioned below, a delimitation imposed on the project was the researched target group, those in leadership and teaching positions. Simply, those with the most influence, it was believed, would speak on the behalf of those most influenced.

¹²Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert Coleman, *Discipleshift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 13–230.

Definitions

Soteriology can be confusing and controversial. Mentioned above, Brown's Creek Baptist Church is a hodgepodge of soteriological beliefs. Why? Because tradition had regularly trumped truth. Immature and indoctrinated, the congregation generally believed that Calvinism was synonymous with cancer. Worse, Arminianism was not acknowledged and Semi-Pelagianism was widespread. To eliminate confusion and ease controversy, these soteriological camps were renamed and properly defined. Furthermore, prevenient grace, synergism, and monergism were to be properly explained, because they are terms that distinguish these theological camps but are rarely used by congregants.

- **Calvinism or Reformed Soteriology** is a theological tradition that “emphasizes the sovereignty of God in all things, man’s inability to do spiritual good before God, and the glory of God as the highest end of all that occurs.”¹³ Named after the sixteenth-century French reformer John Calvin (1509–1564) and championed by the Synod of Dort (1618–1619), Calvinism is most associated with the term Reformed, hence the name change.¹⁴ Furthermore, Calvinism is to be understood apart from Covenant Theology. According to MacArthur and Mayhue, “The term is applied particularly to the doctrine of predestination, according to which God sovereignly chooses some to salvation not because of any merit or even foreseen faith but simply by His freewill and unmerited grace.”¹⁵ The Particular Baptists, for example, adhere strongly to Calvinism (a particular

¹³Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 1237.

¹⁴Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 509.

¹⁵MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 926.

or limited atonement) without acknowledging Covenant Theology.¹⁶ In sum, the term “Reformed Soteriology” was used synonymously only to describe Calvinism.

- **Arminianism or Freewill Soteriology** is a theological tradition that “seeks to preserve the free choices of human beings and denies God’s providential control over the details of all events.”¹⁷ A soteriological system formed by Jacob Arminius (1560–1609), Arminianism champions human freewill and rejects Calvinism’s definition of predestination in favor of God’s foreknowledge of who will accept or reject His offer of salvation. According to Arminian Roger Olson, “Arminianism affirms the character of God as compassionate, having universal love for the whole world and everyone in it, and extending grace-restored free will [prevenient grace] to accept or resist the grace of God, which leads to either eternal life or spiritual destruction.”¹⁸ General Baptists, for example, adhere to the teachings of Jacob Arminius (a general or unlimited atonement) by acknowledging man’s freewill.¹⁹ In sum, the term “Freewill Soteriology” was used synonymously only to describe Arminianism.
- **Semi-Pelagianism or Hybrid Soteriology** is a theological tradition that “stresses both the grace of God [God’s Sovereignty] and the freewill of man in which he is capable of cooperating with God in his salvation.”²⁰ Influenced by John Cassian (365–435), Semi-Pelagianism is a compromising attempt to settle the soteriological debate between Augustine (365–430) and Pelagius (360–420) concerning man’s condition in relation to

¹⁶Leon McBeth, “Baptist Beginnings,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 48, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 70–71.

¹⁷Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1236.

¹⁸Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 16–17.

¹⁹Leon McBeth, “Baptist Beginnings,” 69–70.

²⁰Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, 760.

the Fall. Rather than deny original sin (Pelagius) or delimit freewill (Augustine), Cassian determined that human beings were damaged and not spiritually dead as consequence of the Fall.²¹ According to popular author and pastor of Moody Church in Chicago, Erwin Lutzer notes, “Semi-Pelagianism is a satisfying halfway house between the extremes of predestination [Calvinism] and freewill [Arminianism].”²² Olson suggests that today “Semi-Pelagianism is the default theology of most American evangelical Christians. This is recognized by popular cliches such as ‘If you’ll take one step toward God, he’ll come the rest of the way toward you,’ and ‘God votes for you, Satan votes against you, and you get the deciding vote’.”²³ Admittedly, other hybrids of soteriology are championed (see below). However, the term “Hybrid Soteriology” was used synonymously only to describe Semi-Pelagianism—the soteriology most prevalent among the congregation at Brown’s Creek Baptist Church.

- **Prevenient Grace** is a theological belief that “God’s grace precedes and enables the first stirrings of a good will toward God.”²⁴ Arminians and Calvinists agree that man is totally depraved due to the consequences of the Fall. In other words, neither Arminianism nor Calvinism affirm that man is simply damaged (Semi-Pelagianism). However, rather than predestination being the antecedent to salvation (Calvinism), Arminians put forth the idea of prevenient grace. In short, prevenient grace is a preliminary gift from God that enables the depraved to decide either to accept or reject His primary gift of salvation.

²¹Everett Ferguson, *Church History, Volume One: From Christ to the Pre-Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 283.

²²Erwin Lutzer, *The Doctrines That Divide: A Fresh Look at the Historical Doctrines That Separate Christians* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), 162.

²³Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 30–31.

²⁴Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 20.

- **Synergism** is a theological belief that “human beings work together with God in certain aspects of salvation—especially in regeneration in which a cooperative effort of divine aid and human faith secure salvation.”²⁵ Both Arminianism and Semi-Pelagianism affirm synergism but differently. Arminianism views a cooperation happening following God’s bestowal of prevenient grace in which man is enabled to accept or reject the gospel. Semi-Pelagianism views a cooperation appearing prior to hearing the gospel in which man’s will is bent but not broken in order to receive or reject the offer of salvation.
- **Monergism** is a theological belief that “regeneration is accomplished exclusively by the working of God.”²⁶ Calvinists’ affirm that salvation is 100 percent an act of God. That is, from start to finish, salvation is accomplished by God and for God. Thus, faith is a gift and it is granted as a result of the Holy Spirit’s work. Spiritually dead as a consequence of the Fall, man is unable to cooperate with God to secure his salvation.

Limitations

Limitations are those things outside this student pastor’s control. There were several limitations imposed on this student pastor but only a few could have impacted his research project and are important for discussion. First, project availability was thought to be an issue. The congregation at Brown’s Creek Baptist Church was eager to participate and encouraged their pastor was seeking to obtain his doctorate. However, the truth is that uncertainties of life can easily negate one’s eagerness. For example, work, illness, and death can prevent any of the best congregants to attend. Mentioned above, Brown’s Creek Baptist Church’s congregation is primarily elderly (65+). Covid 19, as this student pastor wrote his thesis, was still a danger.

²⁵MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 938.

²⁶MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 933.

Second, project activity was thought to be an issue. Soteriology is a controversial and often a confusing issue. Calvinism, for example, is seen as heretical. Thus, many will express interest or enthusiasm but may not engage in the discussions out of fear or frustration. Lastly, project approval was thought to be an issue. That is, this student pastor is not the Holy Spirit. Thus, he is unable to coerce or change his congregants' soteriological beliefs.

Delimitations

Delimitations are those things inside this student pastor's control. For example, the research topic itself and the parameters for conducting the project's research. Four delimitations were imposed on the project and are important for discussion. First, the topic of the DMIN project was determined by this student pastor's unique ministry context. Admittedly, missions or ministry could have been viable topics. Mentioned above, the congregation equates missions with membership and ministry with church participation. However, the church's soteriological beliefs appeared to be the most pressing issue. Indeed, one's beliefs about salvation impacts his or her behavior toward missions (i.e., evangelism) and ministry (i.e., equipping the saints). Second, it was this student pastor's desire that those in leadership positions (i.e., deacons) and teaching positions (i.e., Sunday School teachers) participate in the research. Why? Because those groups have the most influence over the other congregants. Moreover, they are more interested to learn and be involved in leading the congregation into the depth and breadth of Scripture. In short, they desire God's Word.

Third, the research was to be conducted on Saturdays for approximately an hour beginning at 11:00am. This allowed church services not to be interrupted and acknowledged the limitation of project availability. Simply, Saturdays were chosen to accommodate work and worship schedules. Furthermore, conducting the research for an hour beginning at 11:00 was

done to minimize distraction and maximize dedication. Research participation was voluntary. Thus, utilizing appropriate time management was thought to reduce fatigue and frustration. Lastly, but certainly not least, the project's focus was on those soteriological beliefs that explicitly influenced the congregation. More specifically, Calvinism (Reformed Theology), Arminianism (Freewill Theology), and Semi-Pelagianism (Hybrid Theology) were the soteriological camps discussed. True, many more soteriological camps exist (i.e., Molinism). However, the conscientious decision to limit the study to these three was based on impact rather than information. Rather than give a brief summary of ten possible soteriological camps, this student pastor's agenda was challenge, correct, or confirm their existing soteriological beliefs. In layman's terms, less was more.

Thesis Statement

Mentioned here again, one's orthodoxy drives his or her orthopraxy. Simply, the Word drives worship. For this reason, it was imperative that Brown's Creek Baptist Church has a course that it could participate in to know God intimately and the salvation He offers intently. In short, it was the hope of this student pastor to have provided a course that brought biblical understanding from the library to a lesson plan. Doing so, it was thought that this student pastor would bring awareness and attention to the study of salvation and Brown Creek Baptist Church would grow abundantly more spiritual. If the congregation at Brown's Creek Baptist Church utilized the course, then they would have a theological understanding of biblical soteriology.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of chapter two is to present the conceptual framework of the DMIN project. More specifically, chapter two will review a selection of contemporary scholarly literature, resort to the commentary of Scripture, and report the common solutions associated with a study of soteriology. Several of the selected sources have contributed to this student pastor's own understanding of soteriology during his time at Liberty University. Indeed, those with a clear understanding of salvation have unshakable peace from God and uncompromisingly preach the good news. Soteriology can be cherished and championed or deemed confusing and controversial. Unfortunately, many find themselves in the second category—confused or considered controversial. Why? Because, the study of salvation is complex. To be sure, demonstrated below, there is a plethora of literature on soteriology. Furthermore, despite the scriptural evidence, there is no scholarly consensus on the subject. Consequently, the gap or problem is not a lack of information. Rather, the issue is one of application. Simply, this researcher has not found a course that bridges the gap from the library to a lesson. In sum, chapter two will introduce, investigate, and interact with the scholarly and scriptural literature on soteriology.

Literature Review

Soteriological confusion and controversy among the uninformed or indoctrinated stems from a lack of in-depth scholarly review of the literary data. Indeed, the congregation of Brown's Creek Baptist Church has not been privy to the information below. Consequently, some deem Calvinism to be an impossibility, others think Arminianism is irrelevant, and many consider

Semi-Pelagianism an intriguing soteriological option. While a majority in the church would be considered Semi-Pelagianists, a hybrid of the classical teachings from Augustine and Pelagius, the congregants cannot accurately define or adequately describe their beliefs biblically or theologically. Worse, the church is unable to give appropriate answers to why it deems certain soteriological camps to be an impossible or irrelevant option. In short, the church does not know why it believes what it believes. Noteworthy, some of the congregants adhere strongly to the teaching of Calvin or Arminius. Still, the same problem emerges, they cannot answer the question of why they believe what they believe to be true. Thus, it is this student's agenda to survey and synthesize the published literary data so that the church will have an informed foundation for what it reports to believe. "Spiritual formation," says Paul Pettit, professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, "as an academic discipline in the field of Christian ministry involves learning."²⁷ Thus, the intent of this section is to disclose and describe the three prominent soteriological views associated with this student pastor's church. This literature review will cover the historical positions, theological precepts, biblical precedents, exegetical problems, and contemporary perspectives of soteriology.

Historical Positions of Soteriology

Historically, soteriology has garnered much attention. The classical feuds between Christian thinkers Augustine and Pelagius, Luther and Erasmus, Calvin and Arminius, and Whitefield and Wesley only support this fact.²⁸ Nonetheless, it was the feuds between Augustine vs. Pelagius and Calvin vs. Arminius that shaped the historical landscape most notably. According to Charles Hill, retired professor at Reformed Theological Seminary, Augustine was

²⁷Paul Pettit, ed., *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2008), 18-19.

²⁸Lutzer, *The Doctrines That Divide*, 153-224.

perhaps the unquestioned apologetic giant of the patristic period.²⁹ The dispute between Augustine and Pelagius centered on the human condition post-Fall.³⁰ More specifically, was the human will affected by the Fall to the extent that divine assistance was needed for persons to choose and do good (Augustine) or was the human will unaffected by the Fall excusing divine assistance for persons to choose and do good (Pelagius)? According to church historian Everett Ferguson, the feud quickly resulted in Semi-Pelagianism, the belief that human beings are sick but not dead.³¹ Nevertheless, it was condemned at the Synod of Orange in 529 for its denial of original sin and was replaced with a milder form of Augustinianism which affirmed original sin but adopted the doctrine of prevenient grace.

Semi-Augustinianism would be the soteriology of the catholic (universal) church for the next several centuries.³² That is, until the feud between the associates of John Calvin and Jacob Arminius centered on God's role in salvation. The dispute generated two competing systems of belief, clear and concise doctrines of salvation, which are still articulated today. According to Erwin Lutzer, "In our generation, the names most frequently associated with the free will/predestination dispute are those of John Calvin and Jacob Arminius."³³ Is the will of God the basis for salvation (Divine Predestination; Calvin) or is the will of man the basis for salvation (Divine Foreknowledge; Arminius)? Theologically, the feud naturally challenged the merits of the doctrine of prevenient grace. Arminianism, like Semi-Pelagianism, was condemned by the

²⁹Charles E. Hill, "The Truth Above All Demonstration: Scripture in the Patristic Period to Augustine," in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 59–60.

³⁰Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, vol. 2, rev. ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010), 248–50.

³¹Ferguson, *Church History, Volume One*, 282–84.

³²Ferguson, *Church History, Volume One*, 300–01.

³³Lutzer, *The Doctrines That Divide*, 177.

Synod of Dort in 1619.³⁴ Consequently, the controversies between Augustine and Pelagius and Calvin and Arminius naturally led to three soteriological camps—three identifiable belief systems and proponents of those systems. What follows, surveying and synthesizing only the historical literature, is a historical sketch of these soteriological positions—the first step toward having an informed foundation for what one reports to believe.

Calvinists³⁵

Those labeled Calvinist adhere to the teachings of John Calvin. Respected pastor and theologian of the Reformation (AD 1509–1564), Calvin endured a difficult upbringing. In fact, his mother died in AD 1514–15 and his father was excommunicated from the church in AD 1528 which resulted in the elder Calvin’s removal as its attorney and secretary to the bishop. Despite these difficulties, the young Calvin persevered, obtaining an M.A. in Theological Studies at the University of Paris (AD 1528) and gaining a law degree (AD 1532) after stints at the universities of Orleans (AD 1528–29) and Bourges (AD 1529–31).³⁶ Eventually, in AD 1541, Calvin’s journey led him to Geneva where he spent the remainder of his life as the city’s pastor.

Calvin’s influence and especially his magnum opus, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, proved invaluable for the early Protestant Church. Along with Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli, Calvin challenged the Catholic Church’s authority and traditions while ensuring the Protestant Church’s independence. His magnum opus provided a detailed summary of the Protestant faith and a theological framework for the Protestant church.³⁷ According to Robert

³⁴John D. Woodbridge and Frank A. James III, *Church History, Volume 2: From Pre-Reformation to the Present Day* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 255–58.

³⁵David Head, “The Synod of Dort and the Western Church” (essay, Liberty University School of Divinity, 2019), 4–5.

³⁶Woodbridge and James III, *Church History, Volume 2*, 160.

³⁷Woodbridge and James III, *Church History, Volume 2*, 158–82.

Kolb, retired professor at Concordia Seminary, “Calvin’s exegesis and exposition of the biblical text shaped his formulation of public doctrine.”³⁸ In his magnum opus, Calvin dealt extensively with the doctrine of predestination, favoring a monergistic understanding of election.³⁹ His discussion on the particulars, however, soon led to a division among his followers. Some advocating and advancing Calvin’s teachings, like Franciscus Gomarus, championed supralapsarianism (supra [before] + lapse [the Fall] = before the Fall) which taught the doctrine of double predestination.⁴⁰ Noteworthy, not all Calvinists support supralapsarianism as evidenced by the Synod of Dort’s infralapsarian understanding of God’s decrees (see below). In sum, Calvinists believe, and the doctrine of Calvinism brings to light, the sovereignty of God in salvation.

Arminians⁴¹

Those labeled Arminian adhere to the teachings of Jacob Arminius. He was born Jacob Hermanszoon or Hermann, depending on the scholarly spelling, but commonly known as Jacob Arminius.⁴² Arminius, at the onset of his career, was thoroughly Calvinistic having been trained by Calvin’s successor, Theodore Beza. Following his training, he returned to Holland in AD 1588 and secured a pastorate in the city of Amsterdam.⁴³ His preaching and theological precision from the pulpit soon gained him notoriety. Summarizing retired professor and church historian Justo Gonzalez: his parishioners persisted that he refute the opinions of Dirck Koornhert, a

³⁸Robert Kolb, “The Bible in the Reformation and Protestant Orthodoxy,” in *Enduring Authority*, 105.

³⁹John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 606–35.

⁴⁰Woodbridge and James III, *Church History, Volume 2*, 256.

⁴¹Head, “The Synod of Dort and the Western Church,” 1–3.

⁴²Woodbridge and James III, *Church History, Volume 2*, 255.

⁴³Woodbridge and James III, *Church History, Volume 2*, 255–56.

theologian who rejected aspects of Calvin's teachings, particularly his doctrine of predestination. Expected and believing he could win, the debate between these theologians resulted in Arminius submitting and subsequently switching his theological beliefs to those of Koornhert.⁴⁴

Leaving his pastorate, Arminius was appointed professor of theology at the University of Leiden in 1603. It was there that colleague and strict Calvinist Francis Gomarus challenged his newfound orthodoxy. Once again, the center of the debate was the doctrine of predestination. While both Arminius and Gomarus believed in predestination, each disagreed on when predestination took place and on what basis God's predestined the elect. Gonzalez notes, "According to Arminius, predestination was based on God's foreknowledge of those who would later have faith in Jesus Christ."⁴⁵ In other words, the final destiny of an individual rested not on the sovereign will of God but rather on the individual's personal response. Convinced of this, Arminius appealed to the govern body to convene a synod to settle the issue. Unfortunately, Arminius died before the issue was resolved in AD 1609, nine years before the Synod of Dort, which commenced in AD 1618.⁴⁶ In sum, Arminians believe, and Arminianism brings to light, man's freewill in salvation.

Hybrids

Those labeled hybrids combine the teachings of Augustine and Pelagius with Calvin and Arminius to form a third soteriological camp. Mentioned above, Semi-Pelagianism was birthed out of the feud between Augustine and Pelagius concerning the human condition post-Fall. Rather than deny original sin (Pelagius) or delimit freewill (Augustine), John Cassian (365–435)

⁴⁴Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Reformation to the Present Day*, vol. 2 (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1985), 179.

⁴⁵Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 179.

⁴⁶Woodbridge and James III, *Church History, Volume 2*, 256.

determined that human beings were severely damaged but not spiritually dead as a consequence of the Fall.⁴⁷ While the compromise seemed to settle the Augustine and Pelagius feud, Semi-Pelagianism was condemned by the Synod of Orange in 529. According to Ferguson, “Bishop Caesarius’ views were approved by the Synod which acknowledged original sin and adopted the doctrine of prevenient grace.”⁴⁸ In other words, Semi-Pelagians, it was argued, failed to adequately describe the biblical relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

Centuries later another feud ensued—Calvin vs. Arminius. This time, the center of the debate was God’s role in salvation. Both Calvin and Arminius sought to adequately describe the biblical relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Each man’s position found adherents who considered the other’s position as controversial and condemned. Calvin championed God’s sovereignty and insisted on unconditional election and irresistible grace while Arminius championed man’s freewill and insisted on a universal, prevenient grace. The Synod of Dort condemned Arminianism in 1619. According to Woodbridge and James III, “The synod ultimately ruled that Arminius’ teachings were heretical.”⁴⁹ Simply, Arminianism, it was argued, failed to adequately describe the biblical relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

What was once championed by the Synod of Orange was now condemned by the Synod of Dort; what was once condemned by the Synod of Orange was now championed by the Synod of Dort. Thus, the emergence of Hybrids. The failure of both Synod’s was finding ecumenical agreement for the positions they championed. The Synod of Orange, comprised of synergists,

⁴⁷Ferguson, *Church History, Volume One*, 283.

⁴⁸Ferguson, *Church History, Volume One*, 301.

⁴⁹Woodbridge and James III, *Church History, Volume 2*, 258.

naturally sided with Caesarius.⁵⁰ The Synod of Dort, comprised of monergists, naturally sided with Calvin.⁵¹ Without any consensus, Hybrids were forced to compare and contrast the data for themselves. What is certain, resulting from the feuds, is that there is a relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility. In sum, Hybrids believe in a certain Hybridism, if there is such a word, that brings to light the cooperation between God and man in salvation. Such understanding comes from an attempt to resolve the disputes between Augustine and Pelagius or Calvin and Arminius.

Theological Precepts of Soteriology

Soteriology is a theological term, “a derivative of the two Greek words *soteria* [salvation] and *logos* [word],” used to identify one's precepts or doctrine of salvation.⁵² Unfortunately, not everyone agrees theologically on the precepts explicitly and implicitly taught. Mentioned above, Calvin and Arminius were on opposite ends of the spectrum when it came to voicing their understanding of predestination. Moreover, Hybrids encompass a large group of Christian thinkers that agree and disagree with the sixteenth-century theologians and amongst themselves. For example, Norman Geisler (1932–2019), a hybrid and former professor at Veritas Evangelical Seminary, sought a biblical balance between the extremes of Calvinism and Arminianism but scrutinized other hybrids' balanced approaches.⁵³ Fortunately, the literary data reveals identifiable theological beliefs worth noting. Here, one will be enlightened to the theologies that sparked tension. Simply, what is it exactly that each soteriological school believes? What follows,

⁵⁰Ferguson, *Church History, Volume One*, 301.

⁵¹Woodbridge and James III, *Church History, Volume 2*, 257–58.

⁵²Elmer L. Towns, *Theology for Today*, 2nd ed. (Mason: Cengage Learning, 2002), 419.

⁵³Norman L. Geisler, *Chosen but Free: A Balanced View of God's Sovereignty and Free Will*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2010), 130–32.

extrapolating the facts from the historical literature while exploring the theological literature, is the theological precepts of Calvinism, Arminianism, and Hybridism—the second step toward having an informed foundation for one’s beliefs.

Calvinism

Mentioned above, Calvinism highlights God’s sovereignty in salvation. Calvinism is commonly articulated by using the acrostic TULIP (explained below) which summarizes the Synod of Dort’s verdict of the historical feud between the followers of Calvin and the followers of Arminius.⁵⁴ Noteworthy, the Synod of Dort did not approve of Calvin’s doctrine of double predestination. Rather, the Synod of Dort held to an infralapsarian understanding of God’s eternal decrees. In other words, instead of placing predestination before God’s decree to personally create the world, the Synod placed the predestination of the elect, “which had fallen through their own fault,” after His decree to permit the Fall.⁵⁵

Simply the Synod championed (T)otal depravity of man’s physical and spiritual fallen nature, (U)nconditional election of God to predestine according to His good pleasure and will, (L)imited atonement of Christ’s accomplishments for God’s elect, (I)rresistible grace of God’s effectual calling of God’s elect, and (P)erseverance of the saints whereby God is responsible for the external destiny of the elect.⁵⁶ Some, including Lutzer, suggest replacing “limited atonement” with “particular redemption or definite atonement” because Christ’s death, as expressed in the Synod’s articles, accomplished an actual atonement for sin rather than a potential atonement for

⁵⁴Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 848.

⁵⁵Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes* (New York: Harper, 1877), 582.

⁵⁶Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 519–23.

sin.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, MacArthur and Mayhue summarize these points well, “When God chose some and not others for salvation, He regarded them not as morally neutral but as already-fallen creatures. That is not to say that they were already created and fallen, for God’s decree is eternal and thus pretemporal. Rather, from eternity, before anyone had been created, God conceived of or contemplated all people in light of their fall in Adam and thus as sinful creatures.”⁵⁸

Arminianism

Mentioned above, Arminianism highlights man’s freewill in salvation. According to Olson, “Arminianism is the form of Protestant theology that rejects unconditional election, limited atonement, and irresistible grace because it affirms the character of God as compassionate, having universal love for the whole world and everyone in it, and extending grace-restored free will to accept or resist the grace of God, which leads to either eternal life or spiritual destruction.”⁵⁹ Interestingly, Arminianism affirms “total depravity.” However, in Article IV of the Remonstrants, it is the doctrine of prevenient grace that enables humanity to accept or reject God’s offer of salvation despite humanity’s physical and spiritual fallen nature.⁶⁰

Noteworthy, Arminians are indecisive when it comes to the eternal security of the believer. Nonetheless, logic may prevail here, if one is able to secure salvation then he or she is also able to surrender salvation. Christian revivalist John Wesley and contemporary theologian Clark Pinnock were proponents of Arminianism.⁶¹ According to Douglas Sweeney, Dean of

⁵⁷Lutzer, *Doctrine That Divide*, 185.

⁵⁸MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 505.

⁵⁹Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 16–17.

⁶⁰Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 516–18.

⁶¹John Feinberg, Norman Geisler, Bruce Reichenbach, and Clark Pinnock, *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom*, edited by David Basinger and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1986), 141–62.

Beeson Divinity School, the theological differences between Wesley (Arminianism) and Whitefield (Calvinism) resulted in the friends separating despite their shared success during the Great Awakening.⁶² Wesley affirmed divine grace but admonished those with a Calvinistic understanding of predestination—advocating the character of God as love.⁶³ In sum, Dr. Gregory Boyd and Dr. Paul Eddy best summarize the Arminian theological position, “While salvation comes to humans by God’s sovereign grace alone, this grace [prevenient grace] allows human beings freely to accept or reject God’s offer of eternal life. Put simply: God desires a love relationship with his human creatures, and love—real love—must be chosen.”⁶⁴

Hybridism

Mentioned above, Hybridism is concerned with the cooperation between God and man in the process of salvation. More specifically, Hybridism is interested in the relationship between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. From a Hybrid’s perspective, “A person should not be forced to describe himself theologically by his affinity or proximity to any one church father.”⁶⁵ Consequently, Elmer Towns, retired professor at Liberty University, falls into this category. Town’s beliefs appear to be those closely aligned with Semi-Pelagianism and the congregation of Brown’s Creek Baptist Church. In this soteriological school, humanity is damaged rather than depraved, election describes the position of the saint rather than the process

⁶²Douglas A. Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 49.

⁶³Roger Olson, *Against Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 103.

⁶⁴Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy, *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issue in Evangelical Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 147.

⁶⁵Towns, *Theology for Today*, 427.

of becoming a saint, Christ's death is sufficient rather than effective, man must initiate in the process of salvation, and eternal security is promised rather than persevered by God.⁶⁶

Mentioned above, Semi-Pelagianism was condemned at the Synod of Orange for its misunderstanding of man's inability (see above under "Calvinism"). However, it is also worth noting again, there was never an ecumenical consensus on the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Highlighted in the book by John Feinberg, Norman Geisler, Bruce Reichenbach, and Clark Pinnock, *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom*, Hybridism can confirm God either knows all things, limits His power, or limits His knowledge.⁶⁷ In sum, Hybridism is hard to describe because of its many positions on the theological spectrum that spans from strong Calvinism to strong Arminianism. Furthermore, Hybrids can be liberal or legalistic in their proclamation and promotion of the gospel. Matthew Bates, a hybrid and professor at Quincy University, suggests that salvation is by "allegiance alone," referring to one's response towards God's grace.⁶⁸ Noteworthy, Bates's argument is a response to easy-believism that dominated the 1970s and 1980s due to the predominance of liberal seminaries and postmodernism that has dominated the 1990s and 2000s due to liberal ideals toward objective truth.

Biblical Precedents of Soteriology

Biblically, soteriology permeates God's inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word. That is, one's theology must be biblical or it is baseless. In other words, it is the exegesis of Scripture

⁶⁶Towns, *Theology for Today*, 427–35.

⁶⁷John Feinberg, et. al., *Predestination and Free Will*, 17, 61, 99, 141.

⁶⁸Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 102–03.

that informs one's biblical theology and his or her systematic theology.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, not everyone will agree with that statement. According to Osvaldo Padilla, professor at Beeson Divinity School, "One of the theological movements within broad evangelicalism that has gained momentum in the past decade is postconservatism....A movement that elevates community [culture] over Scripture."⁷⁰ Furthermore, biblical theology is understood in a variety of ways—from purely historical analysis to purely theological application.⁷¹ Olsen calls this phenomenon, "the mystery of perspective."⁷² That is, some may appeal to biblical concepts while others may appeal to biblical contexts. Nevertheless, the theological tensions that separate the above soteriological camps are divine sovereignty and human responsibility. More specifically, Calvinists and Arminians disagree on the extent of the atonement and an exact definition of election and predestination, while Hybrids hold to both positions favor one side or the other. What follows, extrapolating the ideas from the theological literature while exploring the biblical literature, is the biblical precedent for God's sovereignty, predestination, and election—the third step toward having an informed foundation for what one reports to believe.

Sovereignty

Scripture can be interpreted in either an anthropocentric (man-centered) or a theocentric (God-centered) way. According to Walter Kaiser and Moises Silva, distinguished professors of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, "With regard to exegetical practice, the doctrine of divine sovereignty make us particularly sensitive to God's workings in the history of redemption.

⁶⁹Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, 26.

⁷⁰Osvaldo Padilla, "Postconservative Theologians and Scriptural Authority," in *Enduring Authority*, 644–45.

⁷¹Edward W. Klink III and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 21–25.

⁷²Olsen, *Arminian Theology*, 70.

Biblical narrative nowhere suggests that the divine plan has been frustrated by historical accidents or human obstinacy.”⁷³ In other words, while free agency and responsibility are clearly assumed, these human realities coordinate with, more specifically are subsumed under, God's will for His people. Simply, the Scripture reveals that God either allows or actively brings all things about. Thus, MacArthur concludes, “Self-centered man rebels at such a notion, and even many Christians vainly try to explain away the clear truth that God is God and that, by definition, whatever He does can be nothing but just and righteousness. He needs no justification for anything He does—including calling some men to salvation and not calling others.”⁷⁴ So says the Calvinist, but what about the Arminian and Hybrid?

Arminians contend that God's sovereignty should be understood based on His authority rather than His actions. God, according to Olson, is the Divine Ruler who is preserving or sustaining, concurring, and governing.⁷⁵ In other words, it is best to understand God's sovereignty based on who He is in relationship to His creation. A sovereign (first century or twenty-first century) does not determine or dictate every detail of his subjects' lives but governs or oversees in a more general way. In short, viewing Scripture in an anthropocentric way, Arminians see God as a loving and compassionate heavenly Father. Some Hybrids agree with Olson while other Hybrids agree with MacArthur. What is important to note is that Hybrids, unlike Arminians or Calvinists, do not pigeonhole themselves into one biblical perspective.

⁷³Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moises Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 308.

⁷⁴John MacArthur, *Romans 9–16*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1994), 27.

⁷⁵Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 116–17.

Predestination

If God is sovereign, which is supported biblically from all positions, Calvinist's contend that predestination is "generally, God's eternal, uninfluenced determination of all things; specifically, God's eternal choice of those who will be saved and those who will be passed over and condemned for their sin."⁷⁶ Interestingly, Calvin and his followers were proponents of supralapsarianism (see above). In layman's terms, that is placing predestination before God's decree to personally create the world. Calvin and his followers believed in double predestination. In short, God chose some to salvation and others to damnation. Fortunately, the Synod of Dort refused to adopt this view because it did not have biblical precedent. Rather, the Synod held an infralapsarian understanding of God's decrees. Mentioned above, the Synod placed the predestination of the elect, "which had fallen through their own fault," after God's decree to permit the fall.⁷⁷ Romans 8:29–30 and Ephesians 1:5 are just two passages where predestination is explicitly taught.

Nonetheless, Arminians also affirm the biblical precedent for God's sovereignty. Arminians affirm God's perfect love, based on His character, by extending His grace (prevenient grace) to all. Much like the doctrine of the Trinity, says the Arminian, the doctrine of prevenient grace is implied based on the overall biblical evidence. God simply "desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4).⁷⁸ Siding with the Arminians, Hybrids generally support a synergistic understanding of predestination. Why? Because Hybridism is chiefly concerned with the cooperation between God and man in the process of salvation (see above). However, not all Hybrids agree that there is clear and adequate basis in

⁷⁶MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 935.

⁷⁷Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 520.

⁷⁸Boyd and Eddy, *Across the Spectrum*, 153–59.

Scripture for the concept of prevenient grace.⁷⁹ Erickson, a Hybrid and four-point Calvinist, suggests that the biblical evidence favors the position that conversion is logically prior to regeneration. Such understanding, according to Erickson, eliminates the need of an universal enablement but explains how the inability of man and divine grace combine to procure salvation.⁸⁰

Election

According to Paul Enns, retired professor from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, “If the statements of the New Testament are taken at face value, then it is evident they teach Christ died for everyone.”⁸¹ This statement has caused some to oppose both the extremes of Calvinism and Arminianism.⁸² Yet, the Apostle Paul understood that God, “chose both Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ before the world began” (Eph 1:4) for the “praise of his glorious grace” (Eph 1:6), which prompted Thomas Schreiner, professor of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to conclude, “Paul certainly has salvation in mind in referring to election, for election is closely linked to predestination, which in turn is connected to adoption (Eph 1:5), to being a son or daughter of God.”⁸³ Enns is an Hybrid (a moderate Calvinist), Towns is an Hybrid (a Semi-Pelagian), and Schreiner is a Calvinist. In other words, one’s biblical perspective will greatly shape his or her beliefs about God’s sovereignty and predestination. The same is true for the Calvinist, Arminian, and Hybrid concerning the doctrine of election.

⁷⁹Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 857.

⁸⁰Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 863–75.

⁸¹Paul Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, 341.

⁸²Towns, *Theology for Today*, 440.

⁸³Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 561.

If God's sovereignty is evidenced by His actions, predestination is God's choice of persons for eternal life and election is the means whereby He freely chooses some to salvation. So says Calvinist Thomas Schreiner. However, if God's sovereignty is evidenced by His authority, predestination is based on God's love of persons and election is the means whereby He procures salvation for those who freely choose Him. According to Erickson, this basic concept of election is commonly referred to as God's foreknowledge. "Those who are predestined by God are those who in His infinite knowledge He is able to foresee will accept the offer of salvation made in Jesus Christ."⁸⁴ The primary passage Arminians appeal to is Romans 8:29. But what if God's sovereignty is evidenced by both His authority and actions? In short, Hybrids either have to modify or eliminate the idea of total depravity or adopt the concept of prevenient grace to maintain their synergistic understanding of salvation.⁸⁵

Exegetical Problems of Soteriology

Exegetically, soteriology is often misunderstood. To be sure, exegetical studies uncover the biblical data used to formulate biblical theologies and subsequently systematic theologies. If a problem in the analysis of the text occurs here, the student of Scripture risks misunderstanding God's intended message and misapplying God's intended message.⁸⁶ Evidenced above, Calvinism, Arminianism, and Hybridism have all been accused of failing to support their arguments. What follows, extrapolating the ideas from the theological and biblical literature while exploring the hermeneutical and apologetical literature, are the common exegetical

⁸⁴Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 853.

⁸⁵Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 852.

⁸⁶Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 33-34.

problems and the controversial passage most associated with soteriology—the fourth step toward having an informed foundation for what one reports to believe.

Common Problems

According to Fee and Stuart, distinguished professors at Regent College and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary respectively, “Our hermeneutical difficulties here [exegeting epistles] are several, but they are all related to one issue—a general lack of consistency.”⁸⁷ That is, the common hermeneutical fallacy is one’s presuppositions he or she brings to the biblical text. These include, but are not limited to, one’s “theological heritage, church traditions, cultural norms, and existential concerns.”⁸⁸ Presuppositions can result in subjectivity and selectivity, what Fee and Stuart call “getting around” certain passages.⁸⁹ The doctrine of prevenient grace, says the Calvinist, is an attempt to “get around” certain passages such as Roman 9 or Ephesians 1. Or, according to the Arminian, the doctrine of irresistible grace is an attempt to “get around” certain passages such as John 3:16.

Nevertheless, human reason or logic can be beneficial if proven biblical. For example, Erickson, a Hybrid, notes, “It must be acknowledged that, from a logical standpoint, the usual Calvinistic position makes good sense. If we sinful humans are unable to believe and respond to God's gospel without some special working of His within us, how can anyone, even the elect, believe unless first rendered capable of belief through regeneration?”⁹⁰ Such logic caused Erickson to develop his logical order soteriology: effectual calling → conversion →

⁸⁷Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible*, 75.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 863.

regeneration.⁹¹ In short, however the Calvinist, Arminian, or Hybrid frame his theological convictions, those conviction must be consistent with Scripture. Summarizing apologist Douglas Groothuis, common problems arise when clear contradictions are made of the biblical data.⁹²

Controversial Passage

Romans 9 has been at the center of this dispute and subject of much discussion.⁹³ In regards to the discussion, D.A. Carson, retired professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, states, “Of the writing of commentaries on Romans there is no end.”⁹⁴ Concerning the dispute, MacArthur notes, “Throughout church history this passage has often been greatly misunderstood. Some commentators and expositors all but ignore it. Others treat it as a parenthesis that has little, if any, connection to the rest of the letter.”⁹⁵ Unfortunately, those who have ignored or misinterpreted the text have contributed to the controversy between Calvinism, Arminianism, and Hybridism. To be sure, multiple understandings of election have been championed from Romans 9. Is election corporate or individual? Furthermore, does election pertain to salvation or service? According to scholarly commentator Leon Morris, “Throughout this section of his letter Paul seems to have Israel as a whole primarily in mind, not individuals, and to be dealing with election to service rather than eternal salvation”⁹⁶ On the opposite end of the spectrum, New Testament scholar William Hendriksen suggests Paul is dealing with God’s electing purpose is

⁹¹Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 863.

⁹²Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011), 46.

⁹³Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 343.

⁹⁴D.A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey*, 7th ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 82.

⁹⁵MacArthur, *Romans 9–16*, 1.

⁹⁶Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, 352.

individuals for external salvation.⁹⁷ Still, others believe Paul has in mind both individual and corporate election.⁹⁸

While Romans 9 has been understood in multiple ways, the passage must be understood according to the original author. Yes, both God and Paul had a specific meaning in mind for this section of Scripture. According to Fee and Stuart, “A text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or readers.”⁹⁹ In other words, the text must speak for itself. Is Thomas Schreiner’s interpretation the best exegetical explanation? According to the historical-cultural and literary context, it may appear so—he suggests that Romans 9 refers to God’s election of individuals to His corporate family for the purpose of eternal salvation.¹⁰⁰ However, Scripture not Schreiner has final say (see below). To be sure, Towns and former colleague Ben Gutierrez, professor at Liberty University, write, “Romans is not only crucial for Christian theology, but the greatest revivals and reformations throughout the history of Christianity have resulted from an increased understanding and application of the teaching of this epistle.”¹⁰¹ Echoing Paul, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17).

Contemporary Perspectives of Soteriology

Contemporarily, soteriology has been cherished and championed or deemed confusing and controversial. Admittedly, most Christians cherish and champion their understanding of

⁹⁷William Hendriksen, *Romans*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 323.

⁹⁸Everett F. Harrison, “Romans,” in *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 101. Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 552.

⁹⁹Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible*, 77.

¹⁰⁰Schreiner, *King in His Beauty*, 562.

¹⁰¹Elmer L. Towns and Ben Gutierrez, *The Essence of the New Testament: A Survey* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012), 128.

salvation. Both Calvin and Arminius thought so highly of their views that each had apprentices and threatened their adversaries with public hearings. However, some today may find the study of salvation confusing and controversial. Indeed, the majority of the congregants at Brown's Creek Baptist Church consider soteriology a confusing or controversial subject. Why? Because they have no informed foundation for their faith. Rather, their knowledge of soteriology has been limited to only the teachings of previous pastors. Some choose to be vague, others tend to be defensive, and a few can define and discuss it. Compounding the student pastor's ministerial problem, nearly every Christian literature source has an opinion of soteriology (see above). Nevertheless, having examined all the literary data, a few scholarly opinions and this student's opinion will end this literature review—the final step toward having an informed foundation for what one reports to believe.

A Few Scholarly Opinions

Calvinism has its critics. According to Enns, “The issue is that Calvinism attempts to resolve the dilemma of divine sovereignty and human responsibility when it may be best to leave the antinomy alone where Scripture affirms both divine sovereignty and human responsibility.”¹⁰² However, Arminians and Hybrids also have critics. Olson, for example, suggest Hybrids are meaningless, “The plain fact of the matter is that on certain points classical Calvinism and classical Arminianism simply disagree, and no bridge uniting them can be found; no hybrid of the two can be created.”¹⁰³ True, the dispute between Calvinism, Arminianism, and Hybridism is centuries long. Worse, the lack of scholarly consensus reveals that the dispute is far from over. However, according to Michael Gorman, professor at St. Mary's Seminary and

¹⁰²Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, 734.

¹⁰³Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 68.

University, “learning and living out the gospel [becoming the gospel] requires participating in the life of God [knowing the gospel].”¹⁰⁴ The only revelation to know God is the Holy Scriptures.

A Fervent Student’s Opinion

From this student’s perspective, regardless of position, soteriology is not meant to be confusing or controversial. Scripture is meant to be studied, understood, and submitted to obediently. Echoing MacArthur and Mayhue, “We must cry out in worship, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb’ (Rev 7:10).”¹⁰⁵ It is the position of this student that with knowledge comes understanding (cf. Prov 2:6). Thus, he cannot endorse Olson’s conclusion, “After twenty-five years of studying this subject, I have concluded that appealing to Scripture alone cannot prove one side right and the other side wrong.”¹⁰⁶ Rather, Scripture is the only written source that discloses God—His character, intentions, capabilities, and track record. “Christian formation,” says Klaus Issler, professor at Talbot School of Theology, “occurs by immersing oneself [head, heart, and hands] in God’s Word.”¹⁰⁷

Theological Foundations

Having completed a contemporary review of literature, one must then consult the commentary of Scripture. Mentioned above, scholarly assumptions are baseless without the appraisal and approval of Scripture—the theological foundation for soteriology. Unfortunately, the review of literature did not cover the biblical data exhaustively. That is, while Schreiner may

¹⁰⁴Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 2–3.

¹⁰⁵MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 659.

¹⁰⁶Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 70.

¹⁰⁷Klaus Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2012), 136.

appear to give the best exegetical explanation, a thorough analysis of Romans 9 must be given. Why? Because Romans 9 single-handedly settles the soteriological debate, making it highly controversial. This passage will lend its support to either Calvinism, Arminianism, Hybridism, or none.¹⁰⁸ Admittedly, one should refrain from focusing on a single passage to support his or her thesis. However, Brown's Creek Baptist Church is a hodgepodge of soteriological beliefs due to topical rather than exegetical preaching. Thus, featuring one passage has theological and theoretical significance (see below). Nevertheless, Paul gives a global view of Scripture, appealing to several Old Testament passages. In sum, the analysis of Romans 9 will include an exegesis of the controversial passage, an evaluation of contemporary interpretations, and an examination of common objections.

Chosen Passage

Mentioned above, Romans 9 must be understood according to its original author. That is, the historical-cultural and literary context must be thoroughly examined.¹⁰⁹ Thus, it was this student pastor's agenda to engage the controversial passage by first exegeting Romans 9. The historical-cultural context will include details about the author and audience. Then, this student divided the chapter into four subpoints in order to best capture Paul's intended meaning (the literary context). These subpoints are to aid the reader in processing the biblical material while progressing through the biblical message.

¹⁰⁸Hendriksen, *Romans*, 320.

¹⁰⁹J. Scott Duval and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 196.

The Author¹¹⁰

It is impossible to understand the passage without knowing the author. By his own account, Paul was “circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrew; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless” (Phil 4:5–6). However, on the road to Damascus, Paul was radically changed and commissioned by Jesus Christ (Acts 9). No longer was Paul a murderer but a minister of the gospel. Nevertheless, commissioned primarily to bring the gospel to the Gentiles (cf. Gal 1:16), Paul was also called to minister to the “sons of Israel” (Acts 9:15). However, Paul’s endeavors were met with hostility from his fellow Jews. Simply, Paul’s preaching seemingly contradicted the teaching of Moses (cf. Acts 13:38–39). Strongly condemning the legalism of his day and the false security of traditional Judaism, he became despised more than a pagan Gentile. John MacArthur states, “He was the great betrayer, the Judas of Judaism and the archenemy of Israel (cf. Acts 9:23; 13:50; 20:3; 2 Cor 11:24).”¹¹¹

The Audience¹¹²

In the midst of controversy, between Paul’s preaching and traditional Judaism, Christians at Rome were divided over the degree to which they were to retain the Jewish heritage of their faith. Douglas Moo states, “A decade of struggle to preserve the integrity and freedom of the gospel from a fatal mixture with the Jewish Torah lies behind him; a critical encounter with Jews and Jewish Christians suspicious of him because of his outspoken stance in this very struggle lies

¹¹⁰David Head, “Exegetical Paper: Romans 3:21-26” (essay, Liberty University School of Divinity, 2019), 1–2.

¹¹¹MacArthur, *Romans 9–16*, 8.

¹¹²Head, “Exegetical Paper: Romans 3:21-26,” 2–3.

immediately ahead (cf. Rom 15:30–33).”¹¹³ Thus, Paul’s epistle seeks to alleviate the widespread tension (Chapters 1–11) and address specific problems in the church (Chapters 12–16). Indeed, Believers in the city of Rome had not had the benefit of apostolic preaching or teaching (cf. 15:20). It is likely the church had been founded by a group of Jewish Christians who came from Judea—perhaps converts from among the “visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes” at Pentecost (Acts 2:10). Thus, comprised of both Gentile and Jews, Paul desired to visit them (1:8–15). In the meantime, his hope was that his letter would offer encouragement and exhortation.

Paul’s Anguish (9:1–5)

Following his celebration of God’s everlasting love (8:31–38), Paul must now face a harsh reality. One that was from the Word of God and consistent with the Spirit of God. His “kinsmen according to the flesh,” Israelites like himself, are separated from Christ. His brethren’s rejection of the Messiah has caused Paul constant grief, so much so that he wished himself to take their place (cf. Exod 32:30–32). Moreover, they have come short of the covenant promises. In short, Paul contrasts Israel’s prerogatives with her plight. Moo concludes, “Promised so much (vv. 4–5), Israel stands accursed and cut off from God as a result of the gospel.”¹¹⁴ As God’s chosen people, the Israelites were called for a special purpose (adopted as sons), enjoyed the presence of God (glory), given special privileges by God (covenants), taught by God (the Law), had the ability to worship God (temple service), promised the Messiah (promises), founded on the patriarchs (fathers), and provided the lineage of Christ (Christ). Unfortunately, they risked losing it all. Moo notes, “If Israel remains within the sphere of

¹¹³Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 548.

¹¹⁴Douglas Moo, *Romans*, The NIV Application Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 291.

salvation [like some scholars have proposed], we cannot explain Paul's anguish in the preceding verses."¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, the tension created by this situation sets the stage for Paul's argument.

Paul's Argument (9:6–13)

God's faithfulness appears to be in question, hence Paul's argument.¹¹⁶ Essentially the same promises given to believers (Rom 8) were originally given to the nation of Israel. Indeed, Paul calls believers in Christ "sons of God" (8:16). They are God's children (8:16), having been adopted (8:15) to be "fellow heirs with Christ" (8:17). Accordingly, those who believe in Christ are foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified (8:29–30). Nevertheless, it appears that the Word of God has failed. If God was unable to keep His promises involving Israel, how can He be trusted to do the same when it comes to believers of Christ? In other words, the hope of the Christian is wholly dependent on God's faithfulness to His Word.¹¹⁷ Thus, Paul must deal with the tension. His argument must demonstrate that the God who chose and made promises to Israel is the same God who has promised salvation to all who believe.

Paul begins by emphatically denying that the Word of God has failed. Rather, the Israelites have misunderstood God's redemptive plan. Indeed, "they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." In other words, God's means of maintaining His promises is through sovereign election.¹¹⁸ To demonstrate this, Paul makes it abundantly clear that physical descent (Isaac) nor human merit (Jacob) guarantee God's blessings. Rather, God is free to choose whomever He pleases according to His purposes. Interestingly, both Isaac and Jacob were

¹¹⁵Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 562.

¹¹⁶Hendriksen, *Romans*, 317.

¹¹⁷Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 553.

¹¹⁸Hendriksen, *Romans*, 320–24.

chosen before birth to receive the covenant blessings (Gen 18:10; 25:23). To make sure his audience understood, Paul quotes Malachi 1:2–3. In short, God chose one for divine blessing and protection and the other He left to divine judgement.

Paul's Application (9:14–29)

Having presented his argument, Paul now turns his attention to his audience. That is, in a series of rhetorical questions, Paul's aim is application. Anticipating objections to his theology, Paul sets out to defend God's justice and righteousness by appealing once again to what should be familiar Old Testament Scriptures.¹¹⁹ First, Paul quotes Exodus 33:19, where God reveals to Moses a fundamental aspect of His character: He is free to bestow mercy and compassion on whomever He wishes. That is, God's favor cannot be earned or achieved.¹²⁰ To demonstrate this, Paul reminds his readers of God's purpose for Pharaoh (cf. Exod 9:16). Consequently, Israel would celebrate Passover (Lev 23:5–8) and God's name would become known throughout the world (cf. Josh 2:10).

Second, using the Old Testament analogy of a potter (cf. Isa 64:6–8; Jer 18:3–16), Paul argues that God is free to use His creation as He wills. Man has no say over his purpose and eternal destiny nor has the right to question God's motives. In fact, neither Ishmael and Esau nor Isaac and Jacob had any control over who shared God's unconditional covenantal blessings. Moreover, Pharaoh, an enemy of God's people, served a specific purpose. Simply, God is free to do as He pleases because He is God. Concerning the Gentiles and Jews, God can show grace, mercy, compassion, and forgiveness according to His divine purpose and in accord with His promises. Paul demonstrates this by citing Hosea 1:9–10, 2:23 and Isaiah 1:9, 10:22–23.

¹¹⁹MacArthur, *Romans 9–16*, 31.

¹²⁰Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 590–91.

Throughout this section, Paul's use of singular language is noteworthy.¹²¹ In other words, Paul has the individual Jew and Gentile in mind.

Paul's Analysis (9:30–33)

In Paul's final analysis, Israel's present condition is due to her false pursuit. Jews have wrongly twisted the Law to become a means of works-righteousness salvation. John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue state, "The Mosaic Covenant was a gracious covenant. It was not a means of salvation but the God-intended way for Israel to show its love and commitment to God."¹²² To be sure, the Mosaic covenant was bilateral, conditional, and nullifiable, being contingent on Israel's obedience to God (Deut 28–29). Perverting the Law, Jews rejected the Messiah and came short of the covenantal promises. Simply, they had not obtained divine favor the same as their father Abraham (Rom 4). Moo states, "The situation of Israel, Paul emphasized, exhibits a complete contrast to that of the Gentiles he has described."¹²³ However, all hope is not lost. Citing Isaiah once more, Paul reminded his Jewish readers that righteousness can be obtained by believing in the Messiah. Abraham becomes "the father of us all" when one similarly trusts God (4:26).¹²⁴ In the following chapter Paul will express Israel's need for the gospel (Rom 10). Yet, their rejection of the gospel would not cause God's promises to be unfulfilled (Rom 11). Indeed, the apostle Paul was living proof, that through God's sovereign election, God is faithful to His promises (11:1–2).

¹²¹Schreiner, *King in His Beauty*, 562.

¹²²MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 874.

¹²³Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 622.

¹²⁴Gordon D. Fee, "Who Are Abraham's True Children? The Role of Abraham in Pauline Argumentation," In *Perspectives on Our Father Abraham*, edited by Steven A. Hunt (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 137.

Considering Interpretations

Mentioned above, those who have ignored or misinterpreted the controversial passage have contributed to the controversy between Calvinism, Arminianism, and Hybridism. To be sure, multiple understandings of election have been championed from Romans 9. Again, God's sovereignty, predestination, and election are the controversial issues in the soteriological debate between Arminians, Calvinists, and Hybrids. Unfortunately, some misunderstand or misrepresent Scripture in support for their soteriological school. Here, only three will be evaluated which include service election, individual election, and corporate election.

Service Election

Leon Morris is a leading proponent of "service election." According to Morris, neither individual election nor eternal predestination is found in Romans 9. In summary, Paul is dealing with the failure of Israel as a whole to respond to the Messiah over against the fact that the church was largely Gentile. In other words, Paul's argument is that Israel's present hardening does not defeat God's purposes, rather it is God's means of bringing the gospel to the Gentiles. Both Israel and the church are part of God's "great purpose" in history.¹²⁵ Several observations are noteworthy. First, the covenant blessing from which Ishmael was excluded does not include individual salvation. That is, one cannot infer from Romans 9:7–9 that Ishmael and his descendants were eternally lost nor that Isaac and his descendants were eternally saved. Rather, the covenant blessings were privileges for the "children of promise" (9:8).¹²⁶ Second, God's choice of Jacob over Esau was to demonstrate God's unconditional election of one to higher privileges. Neither physical descent nor human merit were involved in God's decision to elect

¹²⁵Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, 352.

¹²⁶Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, 355.

Isaac and Jacob to share the covenant blessings.¹²⁷ Lastly, God's use of Pharaoh illustrates God's providential working in history. In short, Israel's present hardening is likened to Pharaoh's hardening, both display God's plan but neither defeat His purposes.¹²⁸

The argument carries a great deal of force, especially when treated without reference to the logical development of Paul's argument. Simply, Morris fails to account for Paul's anguish over his "brethren" and fellow "Israelites" who are separated from Christ (9:3–4). Instead, Paul's argument (9:7–13) is treated separately. Accordingly, God's Word has not fallen because not everyone is a true Israelite. In other words, God's covenantal promises follow the line of Isaac and Jacob rather than Ishmael and Esau. However, Paul is not moved to unceasing grief (9:2) because corporate Israel has forfeited non-salvific privileges.¹²⁹ Rather, his kinsmen according to the flesh are cut off from Christ. They have remained in unbelief and come short of the covenant promises. Nevertheless, God's faithfulness cannot be called into question (9:6). This leads naturally to Paul's argument: His promises were never intended to be enjoyed on the basis of physical descent or human merit, but according to God's sovereign choice (9:7–13). In short, Morris's interpretation places Ishmael, Esau, and Pharaoh in a more favorable light than demonstrated in Scripture, which downplays the significance of God's covenantal community.

Individual Election

Douglas Moo, Thomas Schreiner, and John Piper maintain that Romans 9 teaches individual election. Unlike Morris, these men suggest the primary issue in Romans 9 is salvation.

¹²⁷Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, 356.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*

¹²⁹Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 562.

Specifically, Paul's concern is the fact that most Israelites in his day were unsaved.¹³⁰ Moo, especially, takes issue "with an increasingly large number of scholars who are convinced that Paul is implying nothing about the salvation of individuals" and those "scholars suggesting Paul many not be thinking of individuals at all but of people groups."¹³¹ Accordingly, Paul's argument (9:6–13) naturally follows his anguish (9:1–5). Several observations are noteworthy. First, corporate Israel is comprised of elected individuals. In other words, if individuals are not elected, one cannot have a corporate group. This is inferred due to Paul's argument that "they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel" (9:6). Moreover, his argument involves the individual selection of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Second, God's covenantal blessings involve eschatological and redemptive promises. In fact, these same promises originally given to Israel are said to also belong to believers in Christ (Rom 8). This is not to suggest the church has replaced Israel; doing so would call into question God's faithfulness. Rather, God's sovereign election guarantees fulfillment of His promises made to Israel. Moo states, "Paul must prove that God has done nothing in the gospel that is inconsistent with His word of promise to Israel; that the gospel he preaches is not the negation but the affirmation of God's plan revealed in the Old Testament (cf. 1:2; 3:21)."¹³² Lastly, Paul's application (9:14–29) and analysis (9:30–33) affirms that God's sovereign election is not inconsistent with His fairness. Both Pharaoh and Israel rejected God.¹³³

¹³⁰Thomas S. Schreiner, "Corporate and Individual Election in Romans 9: A Response to Brian Abasciano," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 2 (June 2006): 373.

¹³¹Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 571.

¹³²Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 550.

¹³³Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 596.

Corporate Election

Brian Abasciano's article, "Corporate Election in Romans 9," is a response to Thomas Schreiner's interpretation of Romans 9. Though both men maintain that corporate and individual election are inseparable, Abasciano disagrees that the former entails the latter. Simply, Abasciano suggests that the primary orientation of election is corporate.¹³⁴ In other words, individuals are elected to salvation only in connection with a chosen group, Israel for individuals in the Old Testament and the Church for individuals in the New Testament. Abasciano offers three general factors in support of his argument. First, he maintains that the Old Testament concept of election was corporate. God chose the nation of Israel and by extension the covenant community.¹³⁵ Second, the language of election unto salvation is always corporate in Paul. Paul, for example, always speaks of the "Church" rather than individuals.¹³⁶ Third, the historical-cultural context of the first-century favored a collectivist rather than individualistic outlook. Personal identity, according to Abasciano, was derived from the group rather than the group drawing its identity from the individuals contained in it.¹³⁷ In summary, Paul speaking of God's promises to the nation of Israel and his use of Old Testament examples simply validate Abasciano's conclusion. Accordingly, today an individual is "elect" when he or she joins the New Covenant Church.

Abasciano's argument carries no force at all. Simply, he interprets Paul's use of the Old Testament separately from its literary context. In other words, Paul's argument (9:6–13) is

¹³⁴Brian J. Abasciano, "Corporate Election in Romans 9: A Reply to Thomas Schreiner," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 2 (June 2006): 352.

¹³⁵Abasciano, "Corporate Election in Romans 9," 353–58.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*

¹³⁷*Ibid.*

highlighted while his anguish (9:1–5), application (9:14–29), and analysis (9:30–33) are ignored. Nonetheless, there are others, such as James Dunn, who still advocate for corporate election after thoroughly examining the passage. However, Dunn’s interpretation fails to adequately distinguish Paul’s “brethren” from the “children of promise.” Indeed, “In rejoicing to belong to the wider family made possible by Christ’s resurrection (8:29) he will not deny his national family, primarily because so far as he is concerned, in the purpose of God, the two families are one.”¹³⁸ Consequently, Paul’s argument (9:6–13) is likened to a test to see whether one is part of the covenant community, true Israel. Thus, Paul’s true concern is not God’s faithfulness but whether his brethren are part of the promises.

Countering Objections

Naturally, objections arise because of a lack of scholarly consensus. Simply, where two or more disagree, a number of objections are put forth. These objections will conclude this section of theological framework. More importantly, by countering these common objections, little else can be said and those confused and considered controversial can put their new found knowledge to practice with a degree of certainty. The common objections heralded against individual unconditional election are the absence of faith, the acknowledgement of nations, and the approval or acceptance of God.

The Absence of Faith

Morris maintained that God’s unconditional election was for service rather than salvation because the eternal destinies of Isaac, Jacob, Esau, and Pharaoh are not explicitly stated.¹³⁹ Although his interpretation failed to follow the logical flow of the passage, others have quickly

¹³⁸James D. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, World Biblical Commentary, vol. 38b (Colombia: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1988), 533.

¹³⁹Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, 352–56.

noted the absence of faith.¹⁴⁰ Simply, God's election unto salvation is dependent upon one exercising faith. Thus, scriptural texts such as Romans 9 cannot be about salvation because God's choice is not conditioned by faith. Nevertheless, Grudem has argued "that Scripture never speaks of our faith or the fact that we would come to believe in Christ as the *reason* God chose us [for salvation]."¹⁴¹ According to Romans 9, Paul makes explicitly clear that neither human choice (who wills) nor human effort (who runs) merit divine favor (9:16). Furthermore, Grudem has noted, "When discussing the Jewish people who have come to faith in Christ, Paul says, "So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works" (11:5–6)."¹⁴² Some may argue that "faith" is not viewed as a "work" in Scripture. While this statement is true, it must also be acknowledged that faith, like His grace, is a gift from God that cannot be exercised by one's own power (Eph 2:8–9). Thus, Grudem can confidently and correctly suggest, "Paul is contrasting God's sovereign choosing of people with any human activity, and he points to God's sovereign will as the ultimate basis for God's choice of the Jews who have come to Christ."¹⁴³ In summary, if election was conditional, then man would be the one sovereign over his destiny which runs contrary to Scripture.

The Acknowledgment of Nations

Abasciano and Dunn's major argument for corporate election is that Paul's reference of Old Testament Scripture points decisively to nations. In short, Genesis 25:22–23 and Malachi 1:2–3 do not refer to individuals (Jacob and Esau) but to nations (Israel and Edom). Moreover,

¹⁴⁰Boyd and Eddy, *Across the Spectrum*, 152.

¹⁴¹Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 677.

¹⁴²Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 677.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*

Paul's mention of Pharaoh could refer to the nation of Egypt. Regarding the later, presuppositions are not sustainable proofs. Speaking on the former, William Hendriksen states, "Though it is true that in Gen 25:22–23 the text turns quickly from babes to nations, nevertheless the starting-point has to do with person, not nations."¹⁴⁴ Upon observing the passage, it becomes clear that the words, "two nations are in your womb" cannot be taken literally. Simply, the true meaning is that the two babes in Rebekah's womb will become rival nations. The Malachi context is also similar. Again the starting point is personal, "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?... Yet I loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau." Thus, Paul had every right to apply these passages to person as he did.

The Acceptance/Approval of God

Advocates for corporate and service election have interpreted God's hatred for Esau in a softened sense of "loved less" or "did not prefer."¹⁴⁵ Those who maintain Romans 9 teaches service election use this interpretation to dispel any notion of eternal destiny. However, the context of Malachi 1:2–3 is one of judgment, punishment, and indignation: "Esau have I hated, and made his mountains a desolation.... They will build, but I will throw down." Moreover, the blessing Esau received from his father more resembles a curse (Gen 27:39–40). It is more plausible that these passages refer to reprobation rather than misfortune. For those who interpret Romans 9 corporately, like Everett Harrison, suggest "hatred" is a way of saying that Esau was not the object of God's electing purpose.¹⁴⁶ More specifically, the nation of Edom was not given

¹⁴⁴Hendriksen, *Romans*, 323.

¹⁴⁵John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1–23*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 63.

¹⁴⁶Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," 105.

the covenantal blessings. Although eternal salvation is in view, corporate election is to be rejected (see above).

Theoretical Foundations

Having reviewed the literature and resorted to Scripture, one must report the solution(s) that would instruct and impact the congregation of Brown's Creek Baptist Church.

Unfortunately, no simple solution currently exists to alleviate the congregation's hodgepodge of soteriological beliefs. The Literature Review and Theological Foundations sections demonstrate that such an idea remains inconceivable. To be sure, Calvinism, Arminianism, and Hybridism are still prevalent in the twenty-first century. Each soteriological school is championed while the others are condemned. There is, however, a way to alleviate the congregations' issue of being uneducated and thereby equipped it to give informed reasons for its soteriological beliefs. That is, the soteriological schools prevalent in Brown's Creek Baptist Church must be compared and contrasted side by side. This requires a sharing of the above literary data in a course. Yet, this researcher has not found a course nor an individual curriculum that adequately bridges the gap from the library to a lesson. Hence, the necessity of this DMIN project. A course, such as the one proposed by this student pastor, would either correct, confirm, or challenge his congregants' soteriological beliefs. Below, this student will demonstrate the necessity of a course by disclosing the strengths and weaknesses of the current literature on soteriology. The literature includes biblical commentaries, historical Christian references, theological works, scholarly journal articles, and hermeneutical or apologetical books. Having disclosed the current literature's strengths and weaknesses, an appeal for a course will be given.

Application of the Literature Review for the Intervention Design

Biblical Commentaries

A biblical commentary is an exegetical study of the historical-cultural and literary context of a particular book of the Bible. Unlike the following literature sources, biblical commentaries focus extensively on the exegesis of Scripture. Their strength is interacting with the biblical text directly in order to deduce meaning. For example, this student pastor appealed to commentaries when exegeting Romans 9 (see above). However, its weakness is the doctrinal orientation or denominational allegiance of its author. Demonstrated above, Leon Morris, Douglas Moo, and James Dunn have differing viewpoints as to what Romans 9 teaches. Dunn, for example, reads Paul utilizing the “new perspective.”¹⁴⁷ Consequently, multiple commentaries must be consulted in order to extrapolate the truth and that endeavor can be costly and illegal to copy. Mentioned in the introduction, the closest Christian library is an hour away. Hence, the need of a course that synthesizes and scrutinizes the biblical data—a sharing of the information above.

Historical Christian References

A historical Christian reference is literature that surveys church history. Unlike biblical commentaries or the following literature, historical Christian references focus solely on the historical facts. Consequently, their strength is showing the development of Christian thought and practices. The church histories used above by Ferguson, Woodbridge and James III, and Gonzalez are great examples. However, their glaring weakness is their lack of theological and doctrinal observation. In short, historical Christian references are limited in their scope. Like biblical commentaries, historical Christian references can be biased, ignoring and favoring certain historical facts. For example, Woodbridge and James III dedicate near twenty-five pages

¹⁴⁷James Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 334–389.

to surveying Calvin's history and only four pages to surveying Arminius's history.¹⁴⁸ Thus, multiple historical references must be consulted to ensure accuracy of the historical data, which can be costly and illegal to copy. Again, the nearest library is an hour away. Hence, the need of a course that carefully synthesizes and scrutinizes the historical data—a sharing of the information above.

Theological Works

A theological work is either a biblical (parts) or systematic (whole) synthesis of Scripture. Paul Enns's theological work is an example of a biblical theology whereas Millard Erickson's work is an example of a systematic theology. Consequently, one advantage that theological works have over historical references is their theological emphasis. Moreover, whereas biblical commentaries focus extensively on the meaning of Scripture, theological works focus on the application of scripture. For example, Enns's work compiles all the soteriological data from the Pauline corpus in order to communicate Paul's viewpoint on election.¹⁴⁹ Thus, a theological work's greatest strength is its ability to extrapolate doctrinal truth from parts or the whole of Scripture. Unfortunately, not all theological works are the same. Why? Because of each author's theological aim or doctrinal affiliation. Much like this student pastor, their weakness is the theological bias. Thus, multiple theological works need to be consulted to ensure transparency, which can be costly and illegal to copy. Again, the nearest library is an hour away. Hence, the need of a course that synthesizes and scrutinizes the theological data—a sharing of the information above.

¹⁴⁸Woodbridge and James III, *Church History, Volume 2*, 159–181, 255–258.

¹⁴⁹Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, 107–119.

Scholarly Journal Articles

A scholarly journal article is an academic literary work that is meant to critique the published literature in a particular discipline. Unlike the preceding literature, scholarly journal articles focus on fact-checking rather than truth finding *per se*. Admittedly, the truth is not lost in the fact-checking process. To be sure, scholars use biblical truth to validate truth claims. Consequently, their greatest contribution is public scrutiny—showcasing or highlighting the faults found in historical, theological, and biblical works. However, a scholarly journal article's greatest weakness is its author's historical, theological, and biblical bias. Schreiner's and Abasciano's articles acknowledge this fact (see above). Thus, multiple journal articles must be consulted to decipher the truth claims. Unfortunately, because of the congregations age, a lack of technological ability prevents most from accessing these sources. Hence, the need of a course that synthesizes and scrutinizes the scholarly data—a sharing of the information above.

Hermeneutical/Apologetical Books

A hermeneutic or apologetic book is a literature designed to teach its readers how to interpret the Bible. Groothius's book is an example of an apologetic literature, while Duval and Hays's book is an example of a hermeneutic literature. Unlike any of the literature above, these books are chiefly concerned with the process of interpretation rather than the product of interpretation *per se*. It is because of this fact that both their strength and their weakness is their use to the reader. In other words, their strength lays in their design to teach how to interpret Scripture while their weakness lays in their decision not to interpret Scripture. Nonetheless, not all hermeneutic or apologetic books are created equal. For example, Kaiser Jr.'s and Silva's hermeneutic requires a theocentric view of the bible.¹⁵⁰ Thus, multiple hermeneutical or

¹⁵⁰Kaiser Jr. and Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 309.

apologetical books need to be consulted to ensure transparency, which can be costly and illegal to copy. Again, the nearest library is an hour away. Hence, the need of a course that synthesizes and scrutinizes the hermeneutical/apologetical data—a sharing of the information above.

Appealing for a Course in the Intervention Design

This Student's Experience

A Liberty University undergraduate and graduate alum, this student pastor is personally aware of the influence and impact a course can have on confirming, challenging, or changing one's beliefs. In 2013, this student pastor was just beginning his academic endeavor. More importantly, his soteriological beliefs resembled that of Brown's Creek Baptist Church's congregation. Specifically, his soteriology was a mixture of Arminian and Semi-Pelagian theology. Today, 2021, this student pastor now stands with John Calvin rather than Jacob Arminius, George Whitefield rather than John Wesley, and John MacArthur rather than Roger Olson. Right or wrong, the transformation was due in large part to Liberty University's School of Divinity's passion and pursuit of truth—through courses designed to report the facts without bias. Once immature and indoctrinated, this student was able to make an informed decision on his soteriological beliefs based on the literature presented in more than seventy-four courses.

John MacArthur's Experience

Similar reports from John MacArthur and Mark Dever validate the appeal for a course to be devised. MacArthur is currently the senior pastor at Grace Community Church in California and has served in that capacity for more than fifty years. However, the congregants of Grace Church did not always support its longest tenured pastor. Indeed, eleven years into his pastorate, MacArthur's staff asked for his resignation over conflicting beliefs. Rather than resigning, he resumed teaching. Within five years, the Master's University (1985) and the Master's Seminary

(1986) were established to offer biblical education through a classroom setting. MacArthur's media ministry, Grace to You, offers a variety of resources that teach God's Word. The curriculum, *Fundamentals of the Faith*, is a thirteen-lesson course designed to inform new congregants of Grace Church's bibliology, soteriology, Christology, ecclesiology, pneumatology, and theology proper.¹⁵¹ According to MacArthur, "the *Fundamentals of the Faith* has played a key role in the spiritual growth of our congregation for decades. It provides new believers with a rock-solid theological foundation. It helps more mature Christians sharpen their understanding of key doctrines and equips them for evangelism and discipleship."¹⁵² Whether one agrees with MacArthur's theology is not the focus here. Rather, it is his methodology that deserves attention. In sum, courses are utilized to inform his congregation.

Mark Dever's Experience

Mark Dever, senior pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church and president of 9Marks, has spent much of his life immersed in the topic of ecclesiology. Indeed, he is the author of *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (2004), *The Deliberate Church* (2005), *What Is a Healthy Church* (2007), *The Church* (2012), and *Discipling* (2016). Although his books can be considered curriculum themselves, it is what each book reveals about the use of curriculum that is noteworthy. For example, according to Dever, a mark of a healthy church is one that is biblically sound.¹⁵³ This doesn't mean that this student pastor believes everyone has to believe exactly the same, but that Scripture is the authority that governs one's beliefs. One way that Capitol Hill Baptist Church has maintained a congregation with sound doctrine (biblical doctrine) has been

¹⁵¹John MacArthur, *Fundamentals of the Faith: 13 Lessons to Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 1–192.

¹⁵²MacArthur, *Fundamentals of the Faith*, 3.

¹⁵³Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, rev. ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 56–76.

through the use of courses. To be sure, Dever has made it mandatory that each new member wishing to join Capitol Hill Baptist Church must complete a new member's class. According to Dever, "At Capitol Hill Baptist, we teach six one-hour sessions in a Friday night/Saturday morning format: "What Is Our Statement of Faith?" (what will we believe?); "What Is Our Church Covenant?" (how will we live?); "Why Join a Church?" (why is membership important, and what does it entail?); "What Is the History of the Church?" (how are we connected to the stream of Christianity that has come before us?); "Who Put the Southern in Southern Baptist?" (what are our denominational organs and distinctives?); and "Nuts and Bolts" (what is the structure and leadership of our local church?)."¹⁵⁴ In sum, courses are utilized to inform his congregation.

¹⁵⁴Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 61.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of chapter three is to present the methodology of the DMIN project. More specifically, the methodology is the introduction and implementation of an intervention design meant for a specific ministerial problem. This student pastor's ministerial problem is his congregants' soteriological beliefs. Immature and indoctrinated, Brown's Creek Baptist Church is a hodgepodge of soteriological beliefs. Some proposit to be Calvinists, some proposit to be Arminians, and some proposit to be Semi-Pelagians. Yet, its congregants cannot accurately define or adequately describe their beliefs biblically or theologically. To confirm, challenge, or correct the church's beliefs, this student pastor will incorporate the literature review and implement it in a classroom type setting. A thorough explanation of the intervention design and the implementation of the intervention design is what follows.

Intervention Design

To best explain the intervention design, this student pastor has separated the section into three parts: The Study's Specifics, The Study's Schedule, and The Study's Scoring. Simply, having thoroughly discussed the study's significance and disclosed the study's strategy in chapters one and two, this student pastor will now focus his attention on the remaining elements of the intervention design. Each part represents a crucial element of the intervention design and reveals the particulars necessary for the implementation of the intervention design. The Study's Specifics will disclose the information pertaining to the participants and place of the intervention. The Study's Schedule will give a detailed literary picture of the intervention plan (i.e., timelines and duration of activities). The Study's Scoring will discuss the types of data that

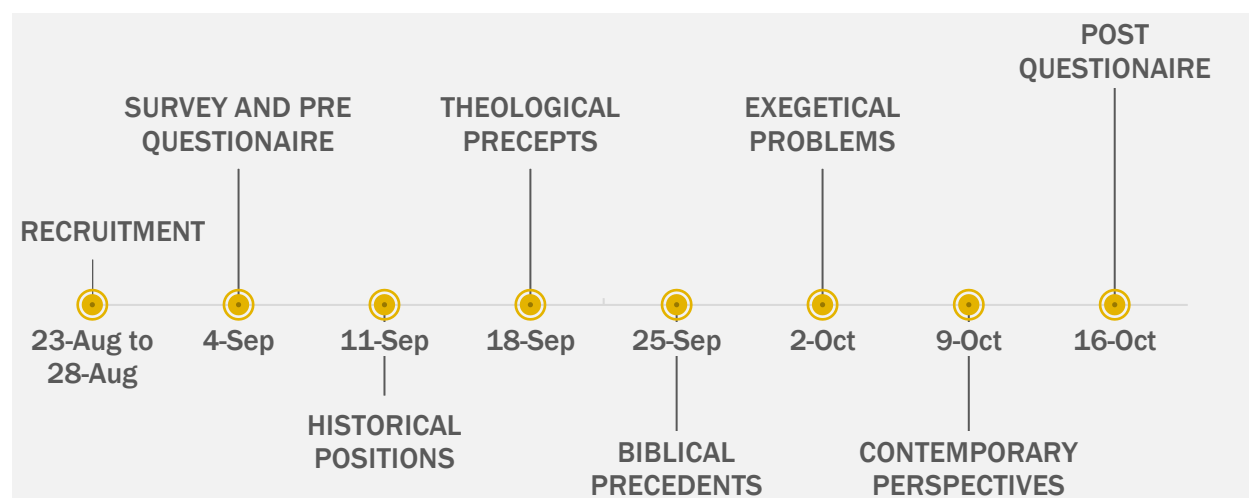
will be collected, the tools for gathering the data, and task of analyzing the data. Below, each part will be discussed in greater detail.

The Study's Specifics

The focus of this DMIN project is the congregation of Brown's Creek Baptist Church. To be sure, it is the individuals (Christians) that make up the whole (church). Thus, none will be excluded from the intervention process. In fact, it is recommended that all congregants participate. However, this student pastor has specifically requested that his church's laymen (i.e., Sunday School teachers) and leadership (i.e., deacons) participate. Why? Because these groups have the most influence over the other congregants. Moreover, they are generally more interested to learn and involved in leading the congregation into the depth and breadth of Scripture. In short, they have shown a desire for God's Word. Nevertheless, the congregation of Brown's Creek Baptist Church is eager to participate and encouraged that their pastor is seeking his doctorate. In other words, participation appears not to be an issue.

At the appropriate time, following IRB approval (see **IRB APPROVAL**), the congregation at Brown's Creek Baptist Church will be given a flyer to inform them of the intervention's start date and to elicit participation (see **APPENDIX A**). Those willing to participate will be given a consent form to be filled out and returned prior to the start of the intervention (see **APPENDIX B**). No permission means no published inquiry. Upon written consent, the participants will be given the information concerning the time and location of the intervention (see **APPENDIX C**). The intervention process will take approximately eight weeks to complete, commencing at recruitment phase of the intervention and completing at the review phase of the intervention.

Table 1.1



However, the implementation of the intervention design will only take seven weeks to complete. That is, for five consecutive weeks, the participants will meet at the fellowship hall of the church on Saturday from 11:00am to 12:00pm to be taught the course's curriculum. Two days, September 4, 2021, and October 16, 2021, will be used to conduct surveys and questionnaires.

The Study's Schedule

At the appropriate time, the intervention will be conducted at 11:00am to 12:00pm on Saturday for seven consecutive weeks. Shown above, the first and last Saturday will be used to conduct pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys and questionnaires. The course itself will take five weeks and utilize the literary data found in the literature review to cover the historical positions, theological precepts, biblical precedents, exegetical problems, and contemporary perspectives of Reformed or Calvinist Theology, Freewill or Arminian Theology, and Hybrid or Semi-Pelagian Theology (see below). Thus, each week will correspond with a section of the course (see **APPENDIX D**). That is, week one will introduce, investigate, and interact with the historical positions of the relevant soteriological camps, week two will cover the theological

precepts, and so on. Upon arrival, each participant will be given the week's agenda (subject matter) and presentation notes (the literature). The presentation, along with its notes, will act as a scholarly critique by synthesizing the current and relevant literary data on soteriology. Each week or curriculum section will fairly classify, compare, and contrast the literary data. Time will be allotted for a question and answer section at the end of the presentation. To better explain the course portion of intervention plan, each section or week will be explained in greater detail below.

Table 1.2

WEEK	OBJECTIVE	APPLICATION
WEEK ONE HISTORICAL POSITIONS	Surveying the Historical Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Calvin • Jacob Arminius • John Cassian 	The Value of Looking Back <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Contributors • The Controversies
WEEK TWO THEOLOGICAL PRECEPTS	Surveying the Theological Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calvinism • Arminianism • Semi-Pelagianism 	The Value of Knowing Beliefs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclose • Discuss • Debate
WEEK THREE BIBLICAL PRECEDENTS	Surveying the Biblical Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God's Sovereignty • Election • Predestination 	The Value of Reading the Bible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Position • The Proof
WEEK FOUR EXEGETICAL PROBLEMS	Surveying the Exegetical Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Problems • Controversial Passage 	The Value of Studying the Bible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Historical Context • The Cultural Context • The Literary Context

WEEK	OBJECTIVE	APPLICATION
WEEK FIVE CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES	Surveying the Contemporary Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Debate • Current Decision 	The Value of Applying the Bible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging • Accepting • Advancing

Week One: Historical Positions

Week one will introduce, investigate, and interact with the historical perspectives of Reformed or Calvinist Theology, Freewill or Arminian Theology, and Hybrid or Semi-Pelagian Theology. Simply, the presentation and curriculum will fairly cover the historical literary data. Here, the questions of who, what, when, where, and why will be answered. Who were the main contributors? What were the major controversies? Where did these contributors preside and when did the controversies take place? Perhaps more importantly, why were the contributors influential and the controversies important? In other words, Brown's Creek Baptist Church must become familiar with each soteriological school's inception and importance. To do so, the course will classify the relevant soteriological school and subsequently compare and contrast each school's main contributor and major controversy. History, if not studied, has a way of repeating itself.

Week Two: Theological Precepts

Week two will introduce, investigate, and interact with the theological precepts of Reformed or Calvinist Theology, Freewill or Arminian Theology, and Hybrid or Semi-Pelagian Theology. That is, the presentation and curriculum will fairly cover the theological literary data. Here, the congregants will be exposed to the relevant soteriological schools' theological and doctrinal beliefs. Topics such as predestination and freewill will be disclosed and discussed.

Furthermore, the theological ideas of prevenient grace, monergism, and synergism will be debated. In short, the presentation and curriculum for week two is designed to answer the theological question, “What do they believe.” To do so, the course must disclose, discuss, and debate Calvinism, Arminianism, and Semi-Pelagianism. Having introduced Brown’s Creek Baptist Church to the historical reality of each school, the congregation must then grasp each school’s soteriological beliefs. One’s behavior (i.e., the controversies) is influenced by his or her beliefs.

Week Three: Biblical Precedents

Week three will introduce, investigate, and interact with the biblical precedents of Reformed or Calvinist Theology, Freewill or Arminian Theology, and Hybrid or Semi-Pelagian Theology. Simply, the presentation and curriculum will fairly cover the biblical literary data. Here, the congregants will be given each soteriological school’s biblical argument for their doctrinal and theological position. According to the literary data, each school defines and discusses God’s sovereignty, predestination, and election differently. Thus, the course must compare and contrast each definition and discussion with the biblical data. Working backwards, theological precepts must have biblical precedents. Having given Brown’s Creek Baptist Church each school’s soteriological beliefs, the congregation must search Scripture. In sum, this week is about providing scriptural proof.

Week Four: Exegetical Problems

Week four will introduce, investigate, and interact with the exegetical problems of Reformed or Calvinist Theology, Freewill or Arminian Theology, and Hybrid or Semi-Pelagian Theology. That is, the presentation and curriculum will fairly cover the exegetical literary data. Here, the congregants will be exposed to the fallacies and false presuppositions associated with

each relevant soteriological school's exegetical study of Scripture. Misunderstanding God's intended meaning and misapplying His intended message can lead to controversy and confusion. Hence, the course must describe common hermeneutical procedures and practices by exegeting a controversial passage. In short, Romans 9 will be a major part of this week's discussion. Noteworthy, Romans 9 will not be interpreted in a sermon. Rather, interpretation of Romans 9 will be a study of the passage's historical-cultural and literary content, a survey of the contemporary scholarly interpretations, and a solution to several common objections. Having provided Brown's Creek Baptist Church scriptural proof, the congregation must learn to articulate their beliefs. Again, working backwards, biblical precedents are derived from exegetical study.

Week Five: Contemporary Perspectives

Week five will introduce, investigate, and interact with the contemporary perspectives of Reformed or Calvinist Theology, Freewill or Arminian Theology, and Hybrid or Semi-Pelagian Theology. Simply, the presentation and curriculum will fairly cover the contemporary literary data. Here, the congregants must make a choice. Does Brown's Creek Baptist Church ignore the study of soteriology, siding with the majority of contemporary opinions? Or, does the congregation implement the study of soteriology, understanding their misconceptions and embracing their need to change soteriological beliefs. To do so, the course must review the current ideologies or opinions associated with the controversial and often times confusing subject. Having supplied Brown's Creek Baptist Church a comprehensive study of soteriology, the congregation must champion their beliefs. Will they stay the same or submit to God's holy, inspired, inherent, and infallible Word?

The Study's Scoring

In the past, the congregants of Brown's Creek Baptist Church have only been exposed to topical preaching—preaching that could ignore the historical-cultural and literary context of Scripture in order to advance a pastor's agenda. That is, according to the congregation, the church has never participated in a study or small groups outside of Sunday School or regular church services. Therefore, the approach that this student pastor will introduce and implement to instruct his church on soteriology is completely new or foreign. Fortunately, however, a new approach means having the opportunity to evaluate the intervention's effectiveness. In other words, did the proposed solution make an impact on the ministerial problem? To sufficiently and successfully answer that question, one must consider, collect, and compile the data. Below, this student pastor will disclose the types of data that will be collected, the tools necessary for gathering the data, and the task of analyzing the data.

Types of Collected Data

The first step in scoring the data is to disclose the activity that will be measured for change. The congregation at Brown's Creek Baptist Church lacks a theological understanding of biblical soteriology. Again, the congregation is a hodgepodge of soteriological beliefs. Thus, the purpose of this DMIN project is to provide a course for Brown's Creek Baptist Church that will bring biblical attention and awareness to soteriology. Simply, a successful outcome would be one where the course made an influence or impact on the congregants' soteriological beliefs. For example, the church as a whole would become like-minded, Reformed in its soteriology. In other words, the basic assumption is that the course will either confirm, challenge, or change the church's orthodoxy. Thus, the specific measurable would be whether the course was effective or ineffective at solving the ministerial problem.

Tools for Gathering Data

The second step in scoring the data is to disclose the specifics on how the collected data will be recorded. In order to measure the course's effectiveness and the congregations' evolution, a survey (see **APPENDIX E**) and a questionnaire (see **APPENDIX F**) will be developed and administered. Surveys will be used to gather the quantitative data. What is the overall consensus of the congregation concerning their soteriological beliefs? Questionnaires will be used to gather the qualitative data. What are the individual congregant's thoughts on his or her soteriological beliefs? A questionnaire prior to the study will show the participants' current knowledge of their soteriological beliefs. A questionnaire following the study will show the course's impact on the participants' soteriological beliefs.

Tasks for Analyzing Data

The final step in scoring the data is to disclose how the collected data that was recorded is to be analyzed. Simply, there must be a way to critically analyze the collected data. Tools such as spreadsheets, graphs, or maps appear to be adequate means to do so. For example, the Social Science Statistics website is one example of data gathering and digital reporting. This student, however, prefers to write out his findings in addition to supplying graphs. That is, he would rather articulate the results in writing than show his results on a spreadsheet or graph. Why? Because understanding can be lost without a clear explanation of the research. For example, readers themselves can hypothesize over the results of a graph. Nevertheless, the primary means of analyzing the recorded collect data will be to compare and contrast the surveys and questionnaires given before and after the intervention process. This information will be shared in writing and accompanied with a visual aid, presumably graphs.

Implementation of Intervention Design

To best narrate the implementation of the intervention design, this student pastor has separated the section into three parts: The Pre-Intervention, The Intervention, and The Post-Intervention. The Pre-Intervention will cover the events leading up to the study's intervention. More specifically, the Pre-Intervention section will discuss the recruitment phase in the implementation of the intervention design. Next, the Intervention section will discuss the research phase in the implementation of the intervention design and disclose the means of collecting the quantitative data (i.e., Surveys) and the qualitative data (i.e., Questionnaires). In other words, the Intervention will cover the events of the study's actual intervention. Lastly, the Post-Intervention will discuss the reflection phase in the implementation of the intervention design so that the disclosure of the quantitative and qualitative data in Chapter Four can be readily understood.

The Pre-Intervention

Recruitment for the study began on July 11, 2021, when the recruitment flyer was posted on the entrances of Brown's Creek Baptist Church. Personally, that day, this student pastor visited the adult Sunday School classes to elicit participation in the study, answer any questions, and handout the consent form to those wishing to participate. Furthermore, during the 11:00am Worship Service, he made an announcement asking the congregation to participate in the study and made available the consent form to the adult congregants willing to participate. The recruitment flyer remained on the entrances of the church and a personal announcement was made the next two weeks. In total, forty-one consent forms were distributed and participation appeared promising.

Unfortunately, on July 25, 2021, prior to the Worship Service, two willing participants for the study raised concern over the recent Delta Variant of Covid 19. In short, twenty public school faculty and forty registered students in Union County had contracted the virus, causing a panic in the community and its churches. Unaware, this student pastor was told that many churches were beginning to make plans to control the spread of the virus—requiring temperature checks, mandating masks to be worn, and demanding social distancing. Smaller churches without the adequate means to social distance (i.e., gyms) were contemplating closure. Simply, what steps or actions was Brown’s Creek Baptist Church going to implement or make? Ironically, a known limitation of the study (project availability) quickly became a reality.

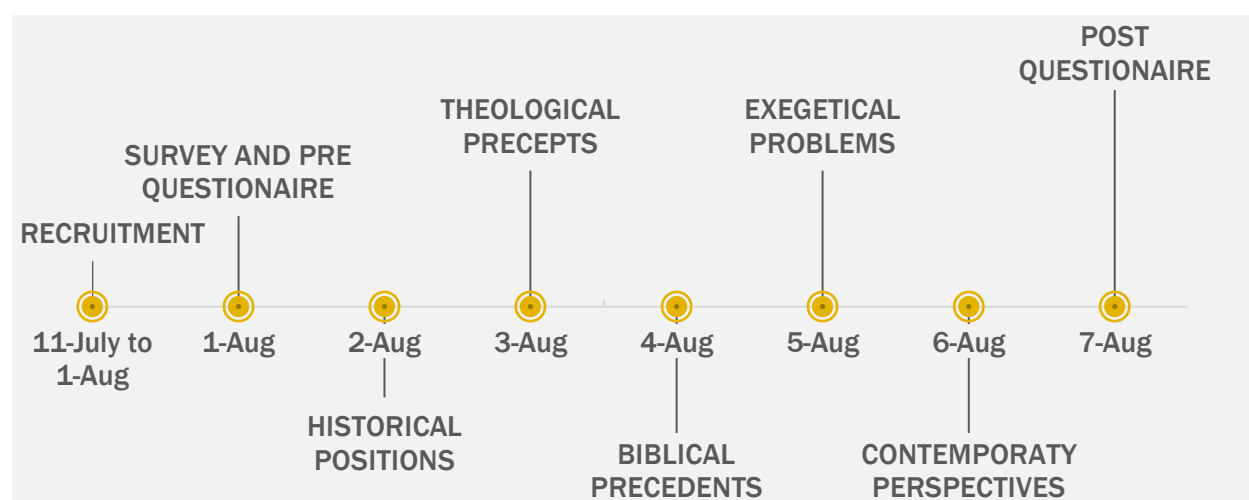
Initially, the recruitment flyer and personal announcement was to advertise the study, giving the participants some time to make necessary plans for when the study was to actually begin. The actual recruitment, which involved collecting the consent forms to ensure participation while actively consulting the laypeople and leadership to participate in the study (a delimitation) was planned to be from August 23, 2021 to August 28, 2021 (see above under Table 1.1). Furthermore, the research phase was to begin September 4, 2021, with conducting and collecting the survey and the first of two identical questionnaires. In other words, six weeks remained until the actual intervention process was to commence. However, the Covid 19 concern accelerated the process by three weeks.

On July 25, 2021, following the Worship Service, this student pastor made an announcement for those willing to participate in the study to meet back at the church at 5:00pm for a brief meeting. That afternoon, he and numerous willing participants discussed the Covid 19 concern while considering the study. Many of the participants voiced concerns that the study, which was planned to begin the same week as the public schools, would be compromised if the

spread of the virus was not contained. In short, the church would have to likely close if the virus continued to spread in the public schools and thereby affecting the community along with its churches. A decision was made that for the study to be conducted safely and successfully, it would have to commence immediately or in the immediate future (i.e., within a week).

Furthermore, because three weeks remained until the start of public schools, it was determined that the original study schedule of meeting weekly for seven consecutive weeks was not an option. Instead, after discussing several options, a decision was made that the study would be conducted in one week for an hour each evening—and the sooner the better.

Table 1.3



On July 28, 2021, prior to the Wednesday Night Service, an announcement was made by this student pastor that the study would commence on Sunday, August 1, 2021. Still, recruitment of the laypeople and leadership of Brown's Creek Baptist Church personally had not been done. Nevertheless, with three days remaining, he contacted the eight Sunday School teachers and seven deacons via telephone. Moreover, prior to and during Sunday School on August 1, 2021, each of the fifteen prospects were given the consent form for participation. During the Worship

Service, another announcement was made by this student pastor for the willing participants of the study to meet back at the church at 3:00pm with their signed consent forms.

Mentioned above, forty-one consent forms were distributed and participation appeared to be promising. Furthermore, fifteen consent forms were hand-delivered personally. However, of the fifty-six outstanding consent forms, eighteen willing participants returned to the church at 3:00pm. Discouraged, this student pastor began the meeting by expressing his thankfulness to those willing to participate in the study for the ensuing seven consecutive nights. Encouraged, nonetheless, that the participants included four deacons and five Sunday School teachers. On the agenda for day one was collecting the signed consent forms, answering any questions the participants may have had, and filling out the survey and first of two identical questionnaires. With no meaningful questions expect about the start time for study during the work week (M-F at 6:00pm), the consent forms were collected and the survey and questionnaire was distributed to the participants to be filled out per its instructions. Sunday, August 1, 2021, at 3:00pm marked the end of the recruitment phase and the beginning of the research phase.

The Intervention

The plan, prior to the intervention, was to research known teaching models for the purpose of implementing the intervention design. However, due to the urgency of starting the study because of the Covid 19 concern, this student pastor resorted to his experience as a student at Liberty University for the past eight years. Tables and chairs were set up to mimic a classroom setting; a whiteboard was placed at the front for a visual teaching aid, and notebooks were prepared with the study's information (see **Appendix D**) to serve as the class textbook.

Figure 2.



Acting as the teacher, this student pastor taught his students (the participants) the prevalent soteriological views of Brown's Creek Baptist Church. The goal of the study (the Intervention) was to provide the participants the necessary information (the Review of Literature) so that they would be informed of their soteriological beliefs. Admittedly, whether the information confirmed, challenged, or changed their beliefs was yet to be determined. Nonetheless, the intervention, which commenced on August 1, 2021, and concluded on August 7, 2021, was designed to spiritually grow its participants. Noteworthy, there was perfect attendance for each day of the intervention (eighteen participants). Below, the implementation of the intervention, the research phase of the study, is narrated in greater detail.

Day One: The Survey and Pre-Questionnaire

Day one of the research phase of the study began on August 1, 2012, at 3:00pm. After collecting the consent forms and confirming that the study would start at 6:00pm, Monday through Friday, this student pastor distributed the survey and the first of two identical

questionnaires to the participants so that each could be filled out before any information was discussed from the study. Otherwise, the survey and first questionnaire would have been influenced by the participants knowledge of the study or the particulars expressed in the study. The participants were given the survey and questionnaire to be filled out immediately. No time limit was given for the survey or questionnaire. However, the last participant finished his survey and questionnaire in twenty-five minutes. When all the participants had finished, they were instructed, per this student pastor, to place the completed surveys and questionnaires in the box marked survey and questionnaires on the refreshment table to the left of the room.

When the participants returned to their seats, this student pastor presented the overview of the study to them. More specifically, the study overview on page one of the textbook was explained using the whiteboard. The whiteboard, used as a visual aid, mirrored the contents on page one of the textbooks. Each day would represent a piece or section of the literary data (Review of Literature) needed to inform the participants of their soteriological beliefs. Collectively, the pieces would form a completed puzzle (a theological understanding of biblical soteriology). Simply, if they could not accurately define, adequately describe, or appropriately defend their soteriological beliefs before this study, each participant would be able to biblically, theologically, and apologetically do so after the study. In sum, the study was designed with their spiritual growth in mind rather than this student pastor's doctorate. The overview lasted until 4:00pm and the participants were dismissed for the evening.

Noteworthy, the participants were told that the three soteriological schools chosen were based on multiple conversations and personal interactions with congregants of Brown's Creek Baptist Church. While the names of the congregants were not given, it was expressed that these conversations and interactions had led this student pastor to select the three for the study. Indeed,

one such conversation or interaction served as an example—this student pastor’s candidating interview in August 2020. The interview was open to all members of Brown’s Creek Baptist Church in which many attended. Three questions pertained to soteriology. The first question was, “Do you believe in catechism?” What the questioner meant to say was Calvinism which was evident in her explanation. When some of the members on the search committee asked this student pastor not to answer the question and others expressed confusion as to what was Calvinism, he concluded that some were informed, others were ignorant, and the questioner (and maybe others) was indifferent of Calvinism. The second question was, “Do you believe babies are sinners.” Before this student pastor was able to answer the question, the questioner and a member of the search committee were at odds. One believed babies were born sinners; the other believed babies were born sinless. He quickly concluded that some were Semi-Pelagian while others were not. The last question was, “Do you believe in predestination or foreknowledge.” This student pastor concluded that the inquirer was Arminian. Thus, the study covering the soteriological schools of Calvinism, Arminianism, and Semi-Pelagianism.

Day Two: The Historical Positions

Day two of the research phase of the study began on August 2, 2021, at 6:00pm. On the agenda for the day was covering the historical positions section of the Review of Literature. To aid in the presentation, the whiteboard mirrored the notes on page two of the textbook. A quote from Winston Churchill, “A nation that forgets its past has no future,” set the tone for day two. In other words, “A church that forgets its history has no future.” Why? Because the past, if not observed, will repeat itself. Controversy and confrontation, like between the followers of John Calvin and Jacob Arminius, will certainly continue if not learned from. In short, regardless of one’s beliefs, he or she can remain cordial despite disagreements. Nonetheless, the participants

were given the overview which lasted forty-five minutes. The remaining fifteen minutes of the meeting was used for question and answers. The meeting was dismissed at 7:05pm.

Noteworthy, the participants appeared confused or looked lost for most of the overview. Why? Because, as one participant explained, “this was the first time ever hearing Calvinism, Arminianism, or Semi-Pelagianism.” Admittedly, some of the participants had heard of Calvinism but were unaware of its history and theology. Furthermore, several of the participants wanted this student pastor to give his opinions (beliefs) on the subject. However, he explained that doing so would jeopardize the study. In other words, this student pastor did not want the participants influenced by his beliefs—and thus answering the second questionnaire based on what the pastor believed. Nevertheless, it was explained that any or all of the participants did not have to agree with the pastor. Furthermore, the pastor would disclose his beliefs on day seven of the study after the questionnaire was submitted.

Day Three: The Theological Precepts

Day three of the research phase of the study began on August 3, 2021, at 6:00pm. On the agenda for the day was theological precepts section of the Review of Literature. Before the presentation, however, this student pastor spent ten minutes reviewing the day two material. While doing so, he changed the names of the soteriological schools to help alleviate some of the confusion. Preferring the names Reformed Theology (Calvinism), Freewill Theology (Arminianism), and Hybrid Theology (Semi-Pelagianism), this student pastor was able to connect the historical positions with their theological precepts. Like the previous two days, the whiteboard’s contents mirrored the notes in the textbook for day three. The presentation lasted fifty minutes. Admittedly, day three was the longest of the week, dismissing at 7:15pm following the question and answer period.

Noteworthy, the participants appeared less confused on day three than they did on day two. One participant explained, “I am familiar with some of these beliefs but did not know what they were called.” In other words, she had heard the theology but did not know of its historicity. Furthermore, to prepare the participants for day four, this student pastor asked the participants (as a class) which theological precepts of the three soteriological positions they deemed correct. Using a dry erase marker, he would mark those chosen as correct with a checkmark and those chosen as wrong with a X. Those chosen to be correct from Reformed Theology were Total Depravity, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints. Those chosen to be correct from Freewill Theology were Total Depravity, Conditional Election, and Unlimited Atonement. Those chosen to be correct from Hybrid Theology were Conditional Election and Unlimited Atonement. All other theological precepts were deemed wrong and marked with an X. The participants’ homework was to determine which had the authority on what was to be believed and practiced—Scripture or Self.

Day Four: The Biblical Precedents

Day four of the research phase of the study began on August 4, 2021, at 6:00pm. On the agenda for the day was the biblical precedents section of the Review of Literature. Prior to the overview, fifteen minutes were taken to review the material from day three. More specifically, this student pastor directed the participants’ attention to the whiteboard. Helpful, the notes for day three and day four of the textbook are nearly identical. Thus, the content on the whiteboard remained the same. In short, the review was to remind participants of the class’s choice of which theological precedents it deemed correct. Why? Because day four would confirm or deny their choices. To be sure, it was noted that Scripture, not self, had the authority to determine what is to be believed and practiced. Aware of the chosen theological precedents for day three, this student

pastor appealed to the scriptures that supported each soteriological school's beliefs. Moreover, each soteriological school's understanding of God's sovereignty, predestination, and election was disclosed and discussed. The presentation lasted forty minutes and the class was dismissed at 6:55pm following a time for question and answer.

Noteworthy, of the scriptures mentioned for support of the three soteriological classes, three passages were observed by the participants and read aloud by this student pastor. Why? Because a few of the participants voiced concerns that predestination and election were unbiblical terms. Thus, Ephesians 1:3–6, John 6:35–40, Romans 8:28–30 were observed and read aloud. In short, it was explained that predestination and election, although some may find the words unpleasant, must be dealt with biblically and theologically.

Figure 3.

Calvinism(Reformed)	Arminianism(free will)	Semi-pelagianism(hybrid)
Total Depravity ✓	Total Depravity ✓	Tragically Damaged X
Unconditional Election ✓	Conditional Election X	Conditional Election X
Limited Atonement ✓ ?	Unlimited Atonement X	Unlimited Atonement X ?
Irresistible Grace ✓	Resistible Grace X	Resistible Grace
Perseverance of the Saints ✓	Undetermined X	Once Saved, Always Saved X

After observing and reading the passages, without thoroughly exegeting each text, the class was

asked to revisit the whiteboard and again select the theological precepts it deemed correct (see Figure 3). In other words, the class was asked to select the theological precepts it deemed correct based on the plain reading of the text. Although Calvinism was the clear choice, questions still remained surrounding the atonement. Simply, “Why do some scriptures use universal language when discussing salvation?” Unfortunately, for the participants, those questions would have to wait to be answered on day five.

Day Five: The Exegetical Problems

Day five of the research phase of the study began on August 5, 2021, at 6:00pm. On the agenda for the day was the exegetical problems section of the Review of Literature. Like the previous three days, some time was taken to review the previous day’s material. Yet, the most pressing issue from day four was the unanswered question, “Why do some scriptures use universal language when discussing salvation?” To answer the question without showing bias, this student pastor used the question to introduce the topic for day five. What are the common problems associated with exegeting (interpreting) Scripture—Consistency and Coherence. That Scripture cannot contradict itself means the contemporary reader’s interpretation must be consistent and coherent. To aid the interpreter, the historical-cultural and literary context of the text must be observed. Ignoring the context, the interpreter’s biblical and systematic theology will also be incoherent and inconsistent: Exegesis → Biblical Theology → Systematic Theology. The presentation lasted forty-three minutes and the participants were dismissed at 7:00pm after a brief question and answer session.

Noteworthy, the question, “Why do some scriptures use universal language when discussing salvation?” was never directly answered by this student pastor. Rather, the presentation was meant to help the participants answer the question for themselves. Indeed, the

presentation involved exegeting Romans 9. Again, the notes in the textbook that corresponded with the day were written on the whiteboard. Nonetheless, in the theological foundations section of chapter two, this student pastor used Romans 9. Paul's use of several Old Testament passages, along with multiple scholarly interpretations of these passages, paved the way for the DMIN project. Admittedly, observed in the critique of service election and corporate election, this student pastor favored Calvinism. However, he did not share his critique with the class. Rather, this student pastor disclosed the historical-cultural and literary context of Romans 9 and delineated the various scholarly views of election. It was expressed that the participants had to choose which view consistently and coherently interpreted Scripture.

Day Six: The Contemporary Perspectives

Day six of the research phase of the study began on August 6, 2021, at 6:00pm. On the agenda for the day was the contemporary perspectives section of the Review of Literature. With day six's notes from the textbook wrote on the whiteboard, this student pastor gave an overview of the course. In short, rather than review the previous day's material, he reviewed the historical positions, theological precepts, biblical precedents, and exegetical problems sections of the Review of Literature. Why? Because day six was decision day. In other words, day six would conclude the course for the participants to take their post-questionnaires. Following the review, the participants were given the choice of either being confused, controversial, challenged, changed, or confirmed. Yes, the course was designed to confirm, challenge, or change the participants' soteriological views. In short, the material was presented to spiritually grow the participants of the study. However, the topic of soteriology can be confusing or controversial. Those still confused or seen as controversial would deem the course a waste of time or irrelevant. Thus, the course would not have been effective. After reviewing the course material and

challenging the participants to make a choice, the participants were dismissed at 6:45 after a time of question and answer.

Noteworthy, only one participant expressed disdain for the course. Simply, the course was “over her head” and “she did not see the point of the study.” Nevertheless, the remaining participants did not express her feelings noting, “I did not know the topic of salvation was that deep” or “will you teach the course again if I can get other church members to sign up.” However the participants truly felt was yet to be seen. In short, the second of identical questionnaires would reveal how successful or unsuccessful the course was in growing the participants spiritually. Those questionnaires would have to wait until the next day at the agreed upon time of 11:00am.

Day Seven: The Post-Questionnaire

Day seven of the research phase of the study began on August 7, 2021, at 11:00am. On the final day of the research phase in the implementation of the intervention design, the post-questionnaire was distributed to the participants to be filled out per its instructions. Interestingly, the participant that expressed disdain for the course returned to complete the post-questionnaire. The post-questionnaire would indicate whether she did or did not learn from the course. Without names on the surveys or questionnaires, this student would not be able to know for sure if that participant truly felt the course was pointless. That is, unless the participant wrote what she voiced the day before, there was no way of knowing which was her questionnaire. Nonetheless, all the participants finished the second questionnaire within thirty minutes. When all the participants had finished, they were instructed to place their questionnaires in the box marked survey and questionnaire on the refreshment table. After expressing a heartfelt thank you for their participation, the participants were dismissed at 11:45am.

The Post-Intervention

On August 7, 2021, at 11:45am, the research phase was concluded and the reflection phase in the implementation of the intervention design had commenced. However, before disclosing the results from the intervention, a discussion must be had about how the data was collected and analyzed. Mentioned above, a survey and questionnaire were used to collect the quantitative and qualitative data respectively. How the data was analyzed depended on the participants responses to the survey and questionnaire questions. Below, the collection and analysis of the data will be discussed in more detail.

The Survey

The survey, per its instructions, was to establish a general consensus of the congregation's beliefs about the doctrine of salvation. Thus, the survey was to collect the quantitative data. As such, its questions were designed to show statistically the participants' likened soteriological beliefs corporately (questions 1 and 2), the participants' level of soteriological knowledge corporately (questions 3 through 6), and the participants' lack of soteriological interest corporately (question 7). In other words, the survey was to identify or verify the prevalent soteriological beliefs of Brown's Creek Baptist Church. Was this student pastor right to select the soteriological schools he did for the study? Does a hodgepodge of Calvinism, Arminianism, and Semi-Pelagianism represent the congregation of Brown's Creek Baptist Church, or is there another soteriological school present? Such information is paramount to the study because the data will reveal whether the course was meaningful or meaningless.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire, per its instructions, was to evaluate the success, or the lack thereof, of the course. Simply, the questionnaire was designed to collect the qualitative data. As such, the

questions were written to measure the spiritual growth of the participant (the individual). The first of two identical questionnaires was given to the participants before the study. How much did they know about soteriology? More specifically, how much did they know about their own soteriological views? Questions 1 through 3 were given to test the participants' actual knowledge of soteriology while questions 4 through 6 were given to reveal the participants' acquired knowledge of soteriology. The same was true for the second, identical questionnaire given to the participants following the study. Did the participants' knowledge of soteriology increase (questions 1 through 3) and did that knowledge change their previous beliefs about soteriology (questions 4 through 6). Like the survey, the questionnaire is paramount to the study. Why? Because the questionnaire measures the impact of the course. Simply, was this student pastor able to inform his participants—giving them a theological understanding of biblical soteriology?

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of chapter four is to disclose and discuss the results of the DMIN project. Immature and indoctrinated, the congregation of Brown's Creek Baptist Church lacked a theological understanding of biblical soteriology. Indeed, the church was a hodgepodge of soteriological beliefs. Calvinism, Arminianism, and Semi-Pelagianism were all observed by this student pastor to be prevalent. Noteworthy, the congregants could not accurately define, adequately describe, nor appropriately defend their soteriological beliefs. Thus, this student pastor designed a course that would biblically, theologically, and apologetically inform his congregation. In short, the course was created to spiritually grow the congregation at Brown's Creek Baptist Church. To test the effectiveness of the course, a survey and a questionnaire were developed, dispersed, and deduced to report the quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Below, the quantitative and qualitative data is adequately observed and an apparent outcome is reported.

The Quantitative Data: The Survey

Mentioned above, the survey, per its instructions, was to establish a general consensus of the congregation's beliefs about the doctrine of salvation. Simply, did the course survey the most prevalent soteriological schools in Brown's Creek Baptist Church? Thus, the survey was designed to report the quantitative data. Fortunately, for this student pastor, the observation and outcome of the data revealed that Calvinism, Arminianism, and Semi-Pelagianism were present. However, the data also revealed that many in the congregation had no firm soteriological foundation. In other words, majority of the participants in the study could not accurately define,

adequately describe, nor appropriately defend their soteriological beliefs. Below, the observation and outcome of the quantitative data is reported in more detail.

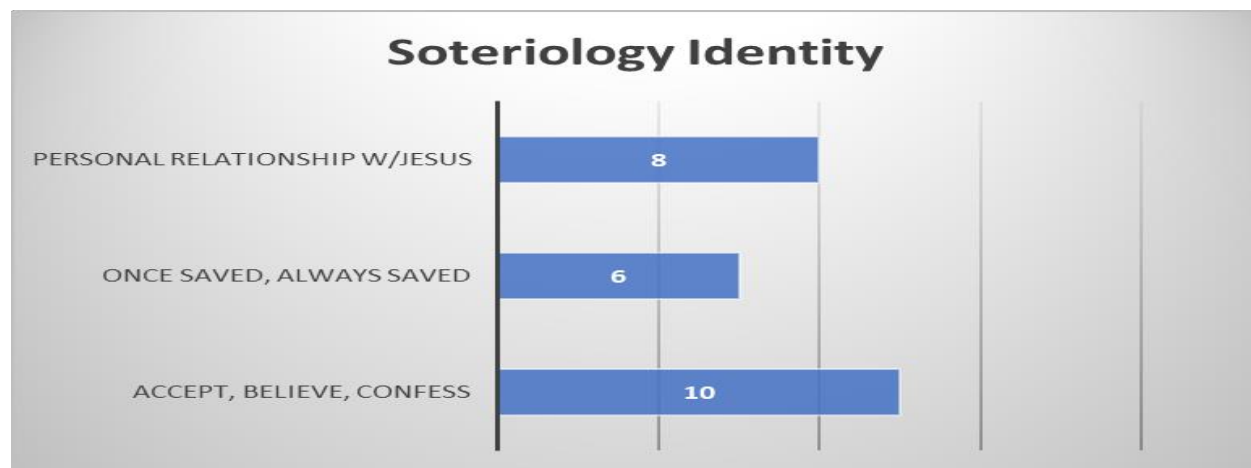
Observation of the Data

The survey consisted of seven questions to determine corporately Brown's Creek Baptist Church's soteriological beliefs. Questions one and two were given to analyze the church's level of soteriological identity. Simply, what are the church and its congregant's beliefs about salvation. Questions three through six were given to analyze the church's level of soteriological intelligence. Could the church and its congregants define election, predestination, and sovereignty while deducing a correlation between the terms? Lastly, question seven was given to analyze the church's level of soteriological interest. Did the church and its congregants have any questions that prompted interest in studying the doctrine of salvation? Below, with the use of graphs, is the observation of the data.

Level of Soteriological Identity

Eighteen answers to questions one and two were used to analyze the church's level of soteriological identity. Admittedly, a multitude of answers were given. However, only three common answers were deduced from the data (see Table 1.4).

Table 1.4

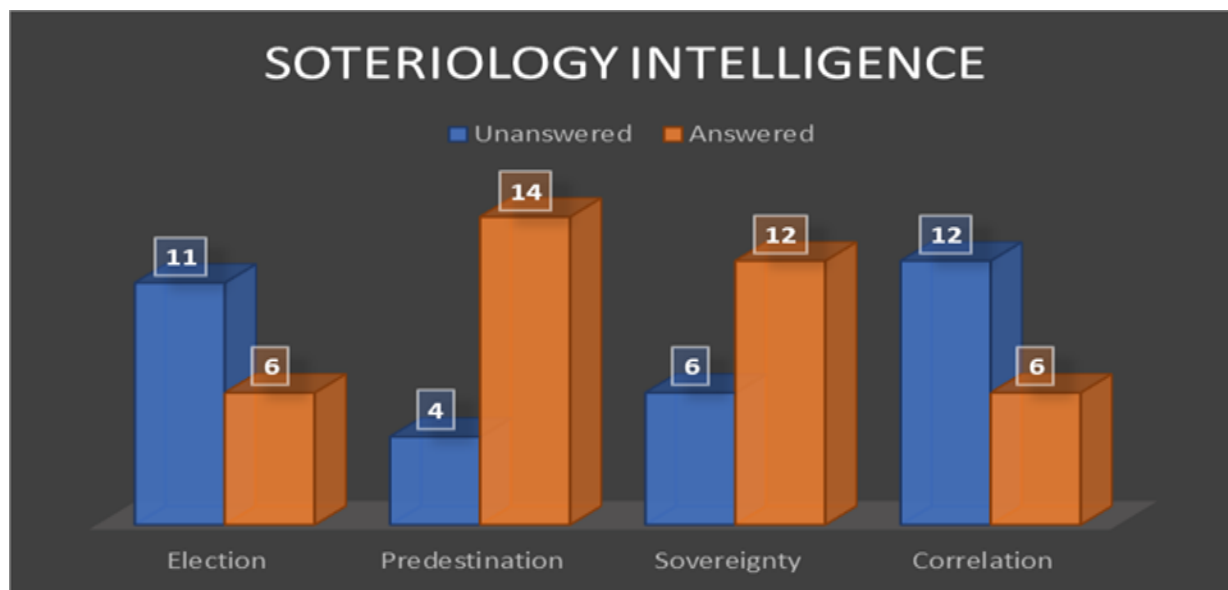


To be considered a common answer or showing consensus, multiple participants had to report the same answer. According to the participants of the study, the church and its congregation's beliefs about salvation included having a personal relationship with Christ whereby a believer who has accepted salvation as gift, believed in the name of Jesus, and confessed his or her sins is given eternal security. While several observations are worth mentioning only two are noteworthy. First, what the participants did not say is interesting. None of the participants mentioned Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection—important facts of the gospel. Second, what the participants did say is insightful. Only cliché answers were given. “Accept, Believe, Confess” and “Once Saved, Always Saved” and “Personal Relationship with Jesus” are common spoken descriptions given to deep spiritual truths. In sum, the absence of important facts of the gospel and the appearance of cliché answers revealed the participants indoctrination. In other words, the participants reported only what they have heard rather than what they had studied.

Level of Soteriological Intelligence

Eighteen responses to questions two through six also revealed that the congregation at Brown's Creek Baptist Church was largely immature. To be sure, the participants were asked to define the soteriological terms election and predestination. Furthermore, the participants were asked to define sovereignty and deduce a correlation between the three terms. Unfortunately, the participants' answers to those question, or the lack thereof, revealed the church and its congregants' level of soteriological intelligence to be low (see Table 1.5). Why? Because the questions pertained specifically to salvation. Election, predestination, and sovereignty combine to formulate one's beliefs. If the participant is unable to define the terms or deduce a correlation between the terms, he or she is still on the “elementary principles of the oracles of God” (Heb 5:12; cf. 1 Cor 3:1).

Table 1.5



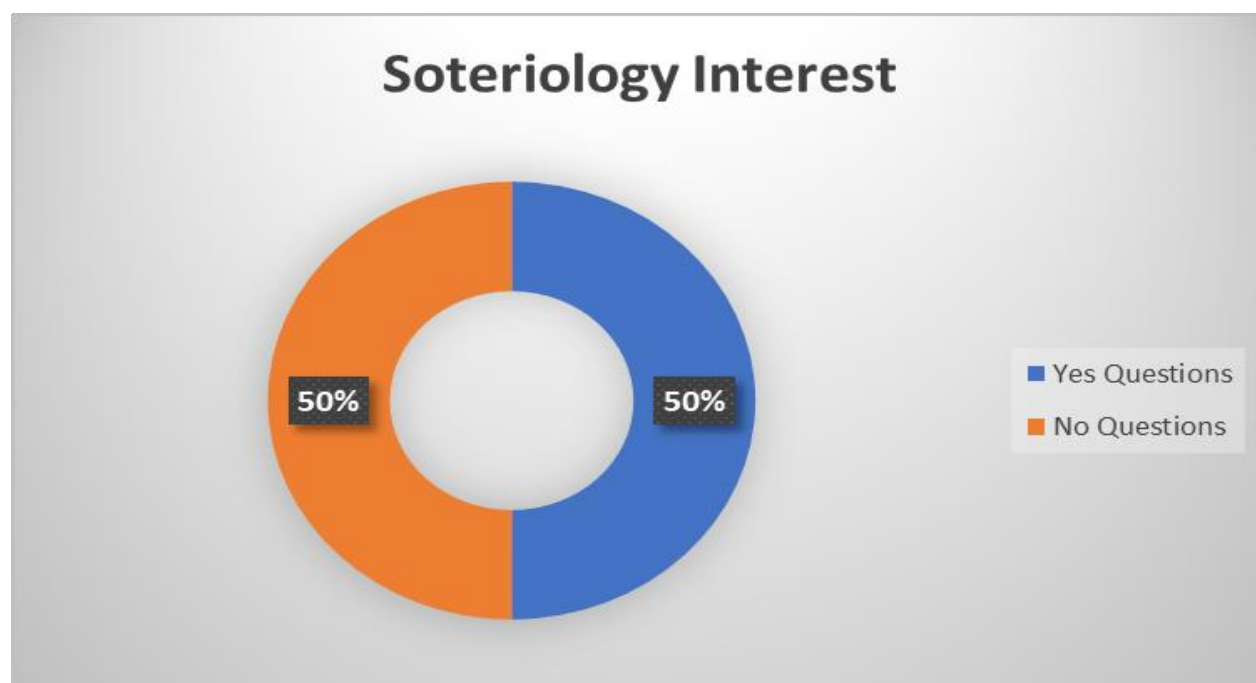
The question of election yielded six responses and eleven nonresponses. Noteworthy, of the six responses, three participants defined election in terms of selecting a public official to office. Interestingly, fourteen of eighteen participants answered the question pertaining to predestination. Of the responses, however, eight defined the term predestination negatively—the idea that God sends some people to hell. Perhaps the participants had “double predestination” in mind when asked to define predestination. Or, could it be that the past pastors’ disdain for Calvinism and the parishioners’ indoctrination led to defining predestination negatively? When it came to the question of sovereignty, only six participants failed to answer the question. Nevertheless, of the twelve responses to the question, sovereignty was defined according to God’s actions or God’s authority. One participant defined sovereignty, “A loving God!” Question six appeared to confirm the participants, thus the church and its congregants, level of soteriological intelligence. Six of the eighteen participants gave responses that could be identified as belonging to a specific soteriological school. Two participants were identified as Arminian, three participants were identified as Calvinist, and one participant was identified as a

Semi-Pelagian. The other participants were unable to articulate or arrive at a correlation between the terms.

Level of Soteriological Interest

Immature and indoctrinated, would the congregation at Brown's Creek Baptist Church have any interest in a study of soteriology? Eighteen responses to question seven were used to analyze the church's level of soteriological interest. The question, "What are some questions you have about salvation?", yielded a 50/50 result (see Table 1.6). That is, nine participants answered the question while nine participants elected to not answer the question. Of the nine answers, three participants questioned their eternal security while six participants expressed a desire to grow spiritually. Could it be that those who chose not to answer the question felt comfortable or confident with their beliefs? Shown above, the quantitative data revealed that church and its congregation were immature and indoctrinated. Thus, the nine who did not respond to the question definitely needed to participate in a study of soteriology.

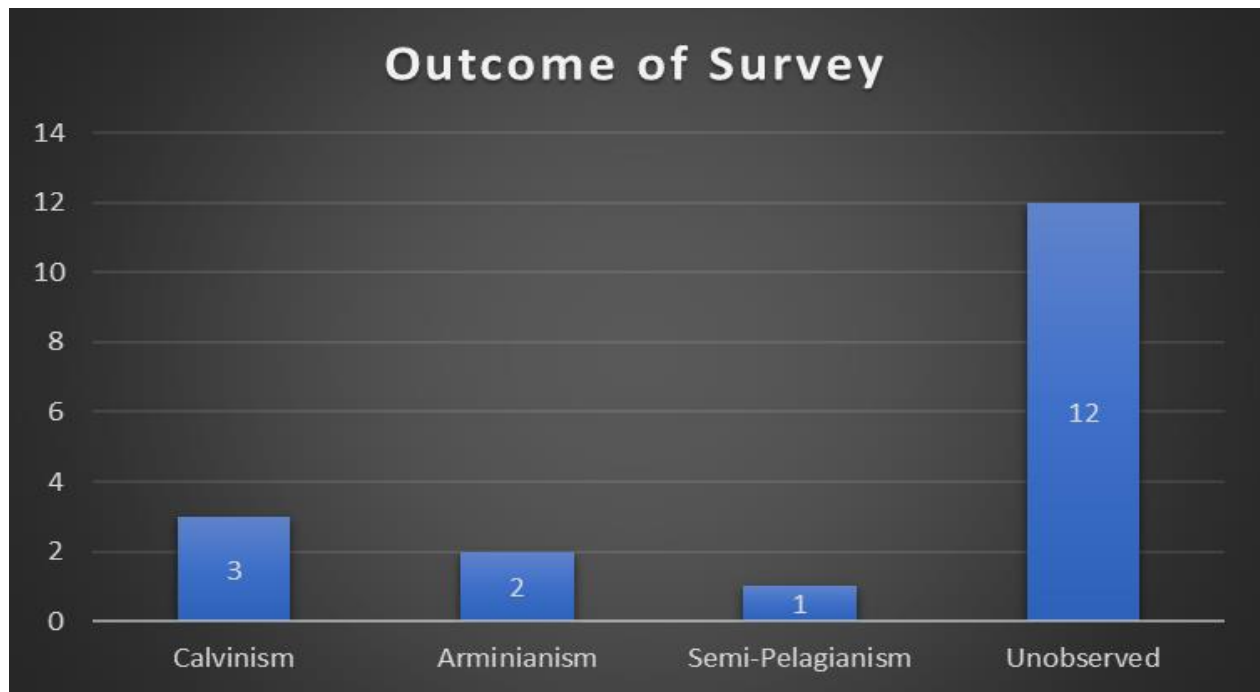
Table 1.6



Outcome of the Data

Observing the data, the participants revealed that the congregation at Brown's Creek Baptist Church was spiritually immature and indoctrinated with some interest in exploring or examining its soteriological beliefs. Thus, the outcome of the data confirmed the need for this study of soteriology. Indeed, the congregation at Brown's Creek Baptist Church lacked a theological understanding of biblical soteriology. More specifically, the church was a hodgepodge of soteriological beliefs. Some reported to believe in Calvinism, some Arminianism, and some Semi-Pelagianism, while others were unable to articulate their beliefs (see Table 1.7). Below, the outcome of the data is discussed in more detail.

Table 1.7



Calvinism

Three participants identified with Calvinism. Indeed, the participants defined election, predestination, and sovereignty in Calvinistic terms. Election, according to one participant, is “God choosing some people for salvation.” Another participant defined predestination as God

determining “where you are going before creation.” Admittedly, the responses were not theologically loaded, written in the language of Calvin or the Synod of Dort. However, the essence of the soteriological school is apparent. Each participant, for example, defined sovereignty based on God’s actions— “One who answers to no one,” “Who is superior” or “Rules” unequivocally. Furthermore, each participant answered that the correlation between election, predestination, and sovereignty was salvation. This salvation belonged to the Triune God, “God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” affirming monergism. In sum, three participants affirmed this student pastor’s observation—Calvinism is believed among the congregation at Brown’s Creek Baptist Church.

Arminianism

Two participants identified with Arminianism. To be sure, both participants defined election, predestination, and sovereignty in terms of an Arminian. Election and predestination were defined as “God knowing in advanced what choice a person will make” and those who believed are “elected in advance to be saved.” Not surprisingly, both participants defined sovereignty based on God’s authority— “The one true King” or “The perfect ruler.” Consequently, both described the correlation of the terms similarly. One stated, “God is sovereign and knows who will trust Christ as Savior and Lord.” The other stated, “While God is sovereign, we have the right to choose the gift of salvation or not which in turn predestines our home eternally.” In sum, two participants affirmed that Arminianism is believed among the congregation at Brown’s Creek Baptist Church.

Semi-Pelagianism

One participant identified with Semi-Pelagianism. He or she affirmed that salvation was achieved through the cooperative effort of God and man. In the participant’s words, salvation is

achieved by “believing in Jesus and work to get in heaven” or “what I do and believe to get in heaven.” Apparent in this participant’s answers was his or her belief concerning man’s condition post-Fall. In short, the participant believe that man was damaged not dead as a result from the Fall. He or she could come to God on his or her own terms without any divine enablement. Consequently, election and predestination were left blank. In sum, this participant affirmed that Semi-Pelagianism, although championed by one participant, was believed among the congregation at Brown’s Creek Baptist Church. He or she, it was summarized, would not belong to a congregation who openly criticized his or her beliefs. Perhaps, there are more Semi-Pelagians in the congregation.

Unobserved

Twelve participants revealed the presence of ignorance on the issue. In other words, twelve surveys reported conflicting or confusing answers. None of those participants found a correlation between election, predestination, and sovereignty. Moreover, in many instances, the definitions of election and predestination reported appeared to be from two different soteriological schools. For example, one participant defined election as “being chosen by God” but defined predestination as “someone choosing his destiny.” Could it be that another Hybrid Theology was present in Brown’s Creek Baptist Church? According to this student pastor’s observation of the data, the answer is, “No.” Why? Because the better explanation for the conflicting or confusing responses is ignorance. Many of the responses given had “IDK” or “I Don’t Know” or “?” attached to them. Indeed, eight of the twelve surveys had the one or more of those designations. In sum, twelve participants affirmed what this student pastor had observed, Brown’s Creek Baptist Church lacked a firm foundation for what it reports to believe.

The Qualitative Data: The Questionnaire

Mentioned above, the questionnaire, per its instructions, was to evaluate the effectiveness of the course. In other words, did the course succeed or fail to make an impact on the participants' spiritual growth? Where the participants' soteriological beliefs confirmed, challenged, or changed by the course? Unlike the survey, the questionnaire was designed to collect the qualitative data. As such, the questions were written to measure the spiritual growth of the participant (the individual). Observing the data, the course made a sizeable impression on the participants. More specifically, it expanded their biblical knowledge significantly. So much so, that the participants were able to make an informed decision as to what they believed. In short, the outcome of the data was that the participants were able to accurately define, adequately describe, and appropriately defend their soteriological beliefs. Below, the observation and outcome of the qualitative data is reported in more detail.

Observation of the Data

The questionnaire consisted of six questions to analyze individually the congregants of Brown's Creek Baptist Church's soteriological beliefs. To be sure, the questions focused on the individual's (the participant) thoughts rather than the church's beliefs. Questions one through three were given to test the participants' actual knowledge of soteriology. Could the participants accurately define their soteriological beliefs? Calvinism, Arminianism, and Semi-Pelagianism were identified as being prevalent in Brown's Creek Baptist Church. Moreover, six of the eighteen participants revealed their affiliation with these soteriological schools. Thus, did the participant actually know what they believed? Questions four through six were given to reveal the participants' acquired knowledge of soteriology. Could the participants adequately describe or appropriately defend their beliefs? The participants' thoughts on election, predestination, and

God's sovereignty would show whether they were informed, immature, or indoctrinated. To test the course effectiveness at confirming, challenging, of changing the participants' soteriological beliefs, two identical questionnaires were conducted and collected before and after the study's intervention. Below, with the use of actual questionnaires, is the observation of the data.

Pre-Intervention Questionnaire

Figure 4.

Figure 4

Intervention Questionnaire

This questionnaire is completely anonymous, please do not provide your name or seek participation from others. In a brief statement (one or two sentences) please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and with all honesty. This questionnaire will be given twice, once before and once after the five-week intervention. The aim of these questionnaires is to evaluate the intervention itself.

1. What is Calvinism/Reformed Theology to you?
I have learned about this before
but I do not remember what
it is
2. What is Arminianism/Freewill Theology to you?
IDK
3. What is Semi-Pelagianism/Hybrid Theology to you?
IDK
4. What are your thoughts about Election?
IDK
5. What are your thoughts about Predestination?
IDK
6. What are your thoughts about God's Sovereignty?
IDK

The typical pre-intervention questionnaire resembled the one in Figure 4. Indeed, many of the participants answered multiple questions with “IDK,” “I Don’t Know,” or “No Clue,” while some of the participants left questions blank. Admittedly, a few participants did attempt to answer each question. Nonetheless, two observations were noteworthy. First, fifteen participants failed to give a reasonable answer to questions one through three. That means only three participants tried to answer the first three questions. Consequently, the data showed that while Calvinism, Arminianism, and Semi-Pelagianism were present in Brown’s Creek Baptist Church (according to the quantitative data), the majority of the participants were unable to accurately define their soteriological beliefs. In short, some *appeared* Calvinist, Arminian, and Semi-Pelagian in their beliefs (Survey) but only a few *acknowledged* Calvinism, Arminianism, and Semi-Pelagianism as their beliefs (Questionnaire).

Second, questions four through six yielded mixed results. The survey showed a low level of soteriological intelligence or understanding by asking the participants to define election, predestination, and sovereignty. More specifically, the participants’ answers to those questions spoke to the presence of spiritual immaturity and indoctrination among the congregants of Brown’s Creek Baptist Church. The questionnaire then affirmed the congregations’ spiritual immaturity and indoctrination. For example, questions four and five were answered by fourteen of the eighteen participants. Interestingly, nine participants answered the question negatively – what election or predestination is not. Indeed, the answers varied from “I don’t believe in predestination” (4) to “I believe in freewill” (6). In other words, ten participants could articulate what they did not believe but could not articulate what they did believe. From this student pastor’s perspective, condemning a soteriological view without championing a particular

soteriological view is an indication of indoctrination. From the answers given, the participants had been indoctrinated to be anti-Calvinists.

Post-Intervention Questionnaire

Figure 5.

Figure 5

Intervention Questionnaire

This questionnaire is completely anonymous, please do not provide your name or seek participation from others. In a brief statement (one or two sentences) please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and with all honesty. This questionnaire will be given twice, once before and once after the five-week intervention. The aim of these questionnaires is to evaluate the intervention itself.

1. What is Calvinism/Reformed Theology to you?
A belief that God predestined some to heaven.
God died for the elect.
2. What is Arminianism/Freewill Theology to you?
A belief that man chooses salvation rather than God.
3. What is Semi-Pelagianism/Hybrid Theology to you?
A belief that man is not depraved.
Everything ~~was~~ about man was messed up in the fall except his will. Until you sin, you are not a sinner.
4. What are your thoughts about Election?
Election is choice. God's granting salvation.
5. What are your thoughts about Predestination?
God's eternal authority to give salvation.
6. What are your thoughts about God's Sovereignty?
God is sovereign over everything.

The typical post-intervention questionnaire resembled the one in Figure 5. Unlike the first questionnaire, eighteen of eighteen participants were able to reasonably answer all the questions. Prior to the course, the majority of the participants were not able to answer the first three questions nor were questions four through six answered intelligently. From this student pastor's vantage point, the course was effective at educating and equipping the participants biblically, theologically, and apologetically. To be sure, two observations are noteworthy. First, the post-questionnaires demonstrated coherence or consistency among the participants' answers (beliefs). For example, the participant's questionnaire in Figure 5 shows coherence between his or her thoughts concerning election, predestination, and God's sovereignty. Election is God actively saving, predestination is God accomplishing salvation, and God's sovereignty appropriates salvation. Admittedly the same coherence was observed for those adhering to Arminianism or Semi-Pelagianism.

Second, the course confirmed, challenged, and changed the participants' original soteriological beliefs. For example, there were those who confirmed Calvinism, those who considered Calvinism, and those who changed their beliefs to Calvinism (see below). True, not all the participants agreed with Calvinism following the course. More specifically, twelve participants chose Calvinism, four participants chose Arminianism, and two participants chose Semi-Pelagianism when asked to state their beliefs and why on the back of the questionnaire. Interestingly, two participants remained negative toward Calvinism following the course. The answers, "I cannot bring myself to support Calvinism" and "no one should believe Calvinism" were fewer than the ten responses given in the pre-questionnaire. In short, the course appeared to have confronted pastoral indoctrination by conveying objective (scholarly and scripturally) information.

Outcome of the Data

Aware that the congregation at Brown's Creek Baptist Church was spiritually immature and indoctrinated, lacking a theological understanding of biblical soteriology, this student pastor devised a course to educate and equip them (see Chapter 3). The course was designed to bring biblical, theological, and apologetical awareness so that its participants would be able to accurately define, adequately describe, and appropriately defend their soteriological beliefs. Thankfully, the course expanded their biblical knowledge significantly, allowing the participants the ability to make an informed decision as to what they believed. In sum, the outcome of the data was that the course confirmed, challenged, or changed the participants soteriological beliefs. Below, the outcome of the qualitative data is demonstrated and disclosed in greater detail.

Figure 6.

The figure consists of two side-by-side images of handwritten responses to an "Intervention Questionnaire".

Left Page (Figure 6):

Intervention Questionnaire

This questionnaire is completely anonymous, please do not provide your name or seek participation from others. In a brief statement (one or two sentences) please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and with all honesty. This questionnaire will be given twice, once before and once after the five-week intervention. The aim of these questionnaires is to evaluate the intervention itself.

1. What is Calvinism/Reformed Theology to you?
Biblical Theology
2. What is Arminianism/Freewill Theology to you?
man centered theology - they believe we have a part in our salvation
3. What is Semi-Pelagianism/Hybrid Theology to you?
more man centered than Arminianism but not 100% sure
4. What are your thoughts about Election?
I believe God elects His chosen people for salvation
5. What are your thoughts about Predestination?
It's Biblical, God does what He wants.
6. What are your thoughts about God's Sovereignty?
I believe God is sovereign over everything in our lives.

Right Page (Figure 6):

Intervention Questionnaire

This questionnaire is completely anonymous, please do not provide your name or seek participation from others. In a brief statement (one or two sentences) please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and with all honesty. This questionnaire will be given twice, once before and once after the five-week intervention. The aim of these questionnaires is to evaluate the intervention itself.

1. What is Calvinism/Reformed Theology to you?
Calvinism is when God has total authority over our lives. God chooses whom He pleases, answers to none. Salvation is 100% work of God, according to His will. Absolute redemption!
2. What is Arminianism/Freewill Theology to you?
Arminianism is when one believes God has limited authority. Salvation is based on man's will (100% man work). God chooses those who will be saved based on man's actions. Possible redemption - man can say no if he chooses!
3. What is Semi-Pelagianism/Hybrid Theology to you?
Semi-Pelagianism is when one believes that God has no authority over our lives. God & man work together in salvation - Salvation is a potential purpose meaning it could potentially save someone or it may not.
4. What are your thoughts about Election?
I believe God chose those who will be saved before we are even born.
5. What are your thoughts about Predestination?
I believe salvation is 100% work of God, He answers to none - it's all according to God's will.
6. What are your thoughts about God's Sovereignty?
I believe God is completely sovereign over all areas of our life - including salvation

Confirming Soteriological Beliefs

Comparing the handwriting, this student pastor observed that an outcome of the course was confirmation. Indeed, this participant's questionnaires revealed that he or she had identified as Calvinist both before and after the course (see Figure 6). Nonetheless, three observations are noteworthy. First, the course enabled the participant to accurately define his or her beliefs. Calvinism went from being a soteriology that "is biblical" to a soteriology that highlighted God's sovereignty "to choose whom He pleases...according to His will." Second, the course enabled the participant to adequately describe his or her beliefs. The participant noted that predestination is not only "biblical" but that salvation is "100% a work of God." Lastly, the course enabled the participant to appropriately defend his or her beliefs. How? By having something to say other than "its biblical."

Figure 7.

Intervention Questionnaire

This questionnaire is completely anonymous, please do not provide your name or seek participation from others. In a brief statement (one or two sentences) please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and with all honesty. This questionnaire will be given twice, once before and once after the five-week intervention. The aim of these questionnaires is to evaluate the intervention itself.

1. What is Calvinism/Reformed Theology to you?
God is King of Kings. God is responsible for our salvation. Not us. God will walk hand and hand with us.
2. What is Arminianism/Freewill Theology to you?
We are predestined based on what we do. We choose God if we want to or not.
3. What is Semi-Pelagianism/Hybrid Theology to you?
We are not sinners till we sin. We work together with God on predestination.
4. What are your thoughts about Election?
Not sure.
5. What are your thoughts about Predestination?
Don't believe God predestines anyone.
6. What are your thoughts about God's Sovereignty?
God is All Knowing.

Intervention Questionnaire

This questionnaire is completely anonymous, please do not provide your name or seek participation from others. In a brief statement (one or two sentences) please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and with all honesty. This questionnaire will be given twice, once before and once after the five-week intervention. The aim of these questionnaires is to evaluate the intervention itself.

1. What is Calvinism/Reformed Theology to you?
God is King of Kings. God is responsible for our salvation. Not us. God will walk hand and hand with us.
2. What is Arminianism/Freewill Theology to you?
We are predestined based on what we do. We choose God if we want to or not.
3. What is Semi-Pelagianism/Hybrid Theology to you?
We are not sinners till we sin. We work together with God on predestination.
4. What are your thoughts about Election?
Christ death served one purpose. Save those he called.
5. What are your thoughts about Predestination?
Gods authority to give salvation. Used to describe process of salvation.
6. What are your thoughts about God's Sovereignty?
He answers to no one. He does what he wants to. He orchestrates all events.

Challenging Soteriological Beliefs

Comparing the handwriting, this participant's questionnaires demonstrated someone contemplating his or her beliefs (see Figure 7). In other words, the qualitative data revealed the course challenged the participants to consider his or her beliefs. Mentioned above, indifference without information reveals indoctrination. This participant did not "believe God predestines anyone." Yet, the participant could not or did not give an explanation for his or her beliefs. Could it be that the participant simply chose not to disclose his or her beliefs? A better explanation would be that the participant did not know what he or she believed. Why? Because questions one through three were left blank and question four was given the response, "Not sure." In short, prior to the course, this participant did not have a firm foundation for his or her beliefs. After the course, the participant was able to give reasonable answers to all six questions. At first glance, one could surmise that the course changed the participant's beliefs. However, according to his or her stated beliefs on the back of the questionnaire, the participant "struggled" with affirming Calvinism.

Figure 8.

Intervention Questionnaire

This questionnaire is completely anonymous, please do not provide your name or seek participation from others. In a brief statement (one or two sentences) please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and with all honesty. This questionnaire will be given twice, once before and once after the five-week intervention. The aim of these questionnaires is to evaluate the intervention itself.

1. What is Calvinism/Reformed Theology to you?
IDK - maybe predestination?
2. What is Arminianism/Free Will Theology to you?
IDK
3. What is Semi-Pelagianism/Hybrid Theology to you?
IDK
4. What are your thoughts about Election?
IDK - We were chosen by God?
5. What are your thoughts about Predestination?
I believe in free will.
6. What are your thoughts about God's Sovereignty?
God is all-knowing & allows us to make choices.

Intervention Questionnaire

This questionnaire is completely anonymous, please do not provide your name or seek participation from others. In a brief statement (one or two sentences) please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and with all honesty. This questionnaire will be given twice, once before and once after the five-week intervention. The aim of these questionnaires is to evaluate the intervention itself.

1. What is Calvinism/Reformed Theology to you? * Will of God - KEY
God has absolute authority. He answers to no one. God's sovereignty is absolute. Christ's death served a particular purpose or mission. Everything is by God's will. God rules His kingdom with limited authority. He is the overseer of events. Will of man: Foreknowledge is used for predestination. Man chooses salvation.
2. What is Arminianism/Free Will Theology to you?
God rules His kingdom with limited authority. He is the overseer of events. Will of man: Foreknowledge is used for predestination. Man chooses salvation.
3. What is Semi-Pelagianism/Hybrid Theology to you?
God has no authority. There is no divine enablement. Humans & God work together to secure fate. You can come or run from God. What are your thoughts about Election?
4. What are your thoughts about Election?
Election is God's eternal action to grant salvation. God has maintained His promise by not choosing a nation but people.
5. What are your thoughts about Predestination?
God's eternal authority to give salvation - 100% work of God.
6. What are your thoughts about God's Sovereignty?
God's authority & actions His sovereignty is absolute.

Changing Soteriological Beliefs

Unlike one being challenged in his or her beliefs, this participant's beliefs were changed. Consequently, Comparing the handwriting, this student pastor observed an outcome of the course to be one of change. This participant, before the course, "believed in free will." After the course, however, he or she defined predestination as "God's eternal authority to give salvation." Moreover, the participant affirmed that salvation was "100% a work of God." In other words, once an Arminian, this participant made an informed decision to change his or her soteriological beliefs to Calvinism. To be sure, according to his or her stated beliefs on the back of the questionnaire, the participant wrote, "I believe in Calvinism because salvation is 100% an act of God."

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The purpose of chapter five is to present the conclusion of the DMIN project. That is, after conducting the research and calculating the results, this student pastor is asked to give his reflection of the study. To do so, the study's successes, shortcomings, significance, and survival must be part of the discussion. In other words, what were the study's successes and shortcomings? Why was the study significant? How will the study survive moving forward? Below, these questions outline this chapter while a summary will conclude the study of soteriology.

The Study's Successes

How does one measure success? For this student pastor, success is measured by indicating a goal, investigating ways to reach that goal, implementing a plan to achieve that goal, and intentionally pursuing that goal. In other words, success, according to him, is not about arriving at a result but actively pursuing a goal. Like the apostle Paul, success is "running the race" and "reaching forward to what lies ahead" in hopes of one day having "a crown of righteousness" (Phil 3:12–14; 2 Tim 4:7–8). Simply, Paul pursued righteousness rather than a result. Similarly, this student pastor's doctrinal pursuit, completing a DMIN project, was about impacting lives. Indeed, the study in general, and course in particular, was designed to change lives—bring theological awareness to biblical soteriology. Accordingly, the participants of the study or course are now prepared to "always ready to make a defense to everyone who asks *them* to give an account for the hope that is in *them*..." (1 Pet 3:15). Thus, the study's successes can be understood pastorally and personally.

Pastorally

Pastorally, the study greatly influenced this student pastor and his parishioners (the participants). For the participants, this study enabled them to accurately define, adequately describe, and appropriately defend their soteriological beliefs. In other words, moving forward, the participants have a biblical, theological, and apologetical foundation for what they purport to believe. Biblically, the congregation at Brown's Creek Baptist Church was spiritually uneducated prior to the course or study. Indeed, the majority were not able to define the biblical terms of election and predestination nor describe the character of God. For many, God was considered loving or unjust, accepting or unfair. This reasoning, of course, came from the participants' disdain for election and predestination (see above). Yet, election and predestination, however defined, are scriptural terms and must be investigated and interpreted. Thus, the course or study brought biblical awareness to soteriology.

Theologically, the congregation at Brown's Creek Baptist Church was spiritually unequipped by its revolving door of pastors. Many of the participants had a negative view of Calvinism (see above). Admittedly, a few of the participants still have a negative view of Calvinism. However, the course or study was designed to introduce, interact with, and investigate the prevalent soteriological schools found at Brown's Creek Baptist Church. Consequently, Calvinism, like Arminianism and Semi-Pelagianism, was given a fair and honest assessment. Doing so, the participants were able to make an informed assessment (scholarly and scripturally) of each soteriological school. Having the participants affirm Calvinism, Arminianism, or Semi-Pelagianism was not the goal. Rather, the indicated goal of the course or study was to bring theological awareness to soteriology. According to the quantitative and qualitative data, the course or study achieved that goal.

Apologetically, the congregation at Brown's Creek Baptist Church was spiritually unestablished in its beliefs. True, the quantitative and qualitative data revealed that the church and its congregants affirmed some basic soteriological beliefs. However, most of the participants could not disclose important facts of the gospel. In short, many of the participants were confused about the atonement of Jesus. Why did Jesus have to die? Whom did Jesus die for? These questions appeared confusing or controversial to the participants. Indeed, some were unaware that salvation was a "deep subject" (see above). Nonetheless, the course or study brought awareness to these and other important questions. To be sure, the second questionnaire demonstrated spiritual growth, both experiential and practical. The participants, in sum, demonstrated the ability to articulate their soteriological beliefs appropriately.

Having the course or study influence the parishioners biblically, theologically, and apologetically, this student pastor was greatly impacted. Why? Because scriptural teaching is often rejected. The apostle Paul, for example, spent eighteen months "teaching the word of God among the Corinthians" (Acts 18:11). Unfortunately, the believers at Corinth failed to adhere to and apply his teaching. Indeed, they remained "infants in Christ" and resembled "men of flesh" (1 Cor 3:1-4). Furthermore, spiritual transformation is often resisted. The audience of Hebrews, for example, because it was comfortable with knowing only the "elementary principles of the oracles of God," it could not comprehend the importance of Christ's priesthood in relation to that of Melchizedek (Heb 5:11-14). Thus, for this student pastor to see his parishioners spiritually grow exponentially was encouraging. Moreover, to witness the parishioners adhere to and apply their pastor's teaching was an accomplishment, an achievement or goal worth pursuing. He is fulfilling his purpose of equipping the saints (Eph 4:12).

Personally

Personally, not just pastorally, this course or study was a success. More specifically, there are two reasons why this course or study was a personal success. First, the course or study demonstrated that this student pastor could teach a controversial and confusing topic. Apparent in the quantitative and qualitative data, Calvinism was synonymous with cancer. True, much of the resentment came from tradition. However, this student pastor was able to introduce, scripturally defend, and explain the theological school without resistance. Yes, one participant showed disdain for the course or study. However, she returned and finished the course. Moreover, Calvinism was not the reason for her disdain (see *The Intervention*). In sum, unlike the theological debates between Gomarus and Arminius, this student pastor was able to have meaningful dialogue and discussion despite the disputed topic (see *Historical Positions*).

Second, this student pastor was able to disclose his soteriological beliefs. Apparent in the theological foundations section of chapter two, this student pastor's soteriological beliefs resemble that of Calvinism. No, this student did not hide his beliefs from the church. In other words, he was not a closet Calvinist. Rather, he has answered questions about his beliefs before, during, and after his interview to be pastor of the church. However, some questions were never asked (e.g., his beliefs about the atonement) and some of this study's participants were not present at his interview. Thus, because of the nature of the course or study, this student pastor was able to disclose his beliefs about the doctrine of salvation. Surprisingly, according to the second questionnaire, many of the participants were accepting of his beliefs. In sum, unlike the Synod of Orange or Synod of Dort, this student pastor's doctrinal orientation did not exclude him from the group (see *Historical Positions*).

The Study's Shortcomings

Shortcomings, like successes, can be defined several different ways. Some may define a shortcoming negatively. Indeed, some may define a shortcoming as a mistake or a misfortune. This student pastor defines a shortcoming as something to be learned or gleaned from while pursuing a goal. Positively, Albert Einstein stated, “Failure [shortcoming] is success in progress.” Indeed, achievement does not exist without adversity nor does success exist without shortcomings. Why? Because achievement and success are measured by actively pursuing a goal rather than a result (see above). Those who are actively pursuing a goal, whether or not they achieve it, do not fail *per se*. Rather, the athlete or academic, the scientist or scholar, view failure optimistically—a great learning opportunity. In short, a negative definition of failure is not in a pursuer’s vocabulary. Consequently, while pursuing the goal of bringing theological awareness to biblical soteriology, this student pastor encountered two shortcomings—information overload and time overlooked.

Too Much Information

While the participants were able to accurately define, adequately describe, and appropriately defend their soteriological beliefs following the course or study, it was apparent that too much information was given to be retained. In other words, this student pastor covered many disciplines that he learned through multiple classes while at Liberty University. Hermeneutics, biblical and systematic theology, and apologetics were disciplines that this student pastor learned while at Liberty. Furthermore, these disciplines aided him in formulating his soteriological beliefs. However, these disciplines were not learned nor applied in a seven-day course. Rather, these disciplines were studied separately and repeatedly in eight-week courses.

Why? Because each discipline is complex, requiring the student to exhaust the scholarly and scriptural data before he or she can move on to a new subject or subpart.

Unfortunately, this student pastor did not afford his participants the same courtesy. Rather, he attempted to condense the scholarly and scriptural information into one course. True, the participants learned and grew spiritually. However, the participants did not receive the benefit of clearly understanding each discipline. For example, hermeneutics was introduced on day five of the course. While this student pastor explained that Scripture, not self, controlled the meaning of the text, neither reader response nor authorial intention was explained.¹⁵⁵ Yes, the importance of understanding the historical-cultural and literary context was disclosed and demonstrated. But, the differences in reading the biblical text (theocentric or anthropocentric) were not detailed, and only mentioned in passing. Doing so, the participants would have been helped in seeing more clearly the distinctions between the soteriological schools. Moving forward, pursuing the goal of bringing theological awareness to biblical soteriology, the course now needs broken up into segments where each day is given its own study.

The Call to Follow Christ, for example, is a discipleship curriculum published by LifeWay.¹⁵⁶ Noteworthy, the curriculum is a seven-session bible study for new and growing believers. Each session is a five-week course meant to impact the beliefs and behaviors of those wanting to follow Christ. The first session is an overview or general study of the six disciplines taught in depth by the remaining six sessions. Like this student pastor's course, the first session is foundational in introducing and interacting with the scholarly and scriptural data. Yet, both do

¹⁵⁵J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 193.

¹⁵⁶Claude King, *The Call to Follow Christ: Six Disciplines for New and Growing Believers* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2006), 1–110.

not succeed at exhausting all the scholarly or scriptural data. Thus, sessions two through six are designed to complement and complete the study. Likewise, this student pastor's study must continue for permanent impact. Mentioned above, this means the course must be broken up—each day or week of the study given greater attention.

Too Little Time

The reason why the disciplines were not covered more thoroughly was because of time. Simply, there was not enough time to exhaust the material. Hence, the need to continue the study. The literature on soteriology and the disciplines that impact the study of soteriology are endless. More ink has been spilled on the doctrine of salvation than it took to write the Bible. Thus, the ministerial problem was not because of a lack of information but because of a lack of application. Consequently, this student used selected sources, primarily those issued to him while at Liberty University, to create a course that would bring theological awareness to biblical soteriology. Unfortunately, what took this student pastor many years and multiple classes to learn, he attempted to teach to participants in a few hours.

Noteworthy, there were several time restraints that prevented this student pastor to exhaust the material properly. First, the course or study was implemented during a pandemic. That is, Covid 19 presented uncertainty and uncontrollable circumstances. Mentioned in the Implementation section of chapter three, a new variant of Covid 19 accelerated the implementation of the study by three weeks. Second, the course or study included voluntary participants. Congregants have jobs, families, and other hobbies or interest outside of the church. Thus, the course or study had to be a reasonable length (i.e., week, days, hours) to garner participation. Lastly, the course or study involved completing this student pastor's doctorate. Indeed, the course or study served a dual purpose. One, the course or study was designed to

spiritually grow the congregation at Brown's Creek Baptist Church. It was the church's prevalent beliefs that were examined. Two, the course or study was developed as part of this student pastor's academic endeavor.

Moving forward, after the pandemic and graduation, the course must be broken up into segments where each day or week is given its own study at the participants' convenience. Furthermore, this student pastor must come up with a new creative way to garner participation. Admittedly, this student pastor used his doctorate to illicit participation in the study. Consequently, the congregation of Brown's Creek Baptist Church was eager to help him pursue his academic goal. Would the congregation be willing to participate in another study without any external motivation? Truthfully, that is yet to be seen. Mentioned in the Introduction, the congregation has been reluctant to participate in activities outside regular church services. Nevertheless, the participants of the study did expressed interest in another study (e.g., Four Views of End Times). Yet, only time will tell if the congregation's attitude has changed toward participating in extra Bible studies.

The Study's Significance

The study's successes and shortcomings aside, its significance cannot be overstated. Indeed, the study developed a course specific to the ministry context of Brown's Creek Baptist Church. More importantly, the study implemented a course that impacted the church. True, the degree of impact, whether it was permanent or temporary, is yet to be seen. Nonetheless, the participants' soteriological beliefs were either confirmed, challenged, or changed because of the study. The soteriological schools of Calvinism, Arminianism, and Semi-Pelagianism were introduced and investigated in order to inform the study's participants. Hermeneutics, biblical and systematic theology, and apologetics, although not examined thoroughly, were implemented

in a study of soteriology. The result? The congregation at Brown's Creek Baptist Church was given a course that brought theological awareness to biblical soteriology. Below, what made this study significant—the course and church—is examined and explained.

The Course

What sets this course apart from the others is its curriculum. The curriculum is noteworthy for three reasons. First, the curriculum is multifaceted. Utilizing the Review of Literature, the curriculum encompassed biblical commentaries, church histories, theological works, hermeneutical/apologetical books, and a few scholarly journal articles. Furthermore, the research included primary, secondary, and tertiary sources. The sources used were those this student agreed and disagreed with biblically and theologically. In short, the multifaceted curriculum allowed this student pastor to do three things: 1) remain unbiased, 2) report only the facts, and 3) be confident. One cannot be unbiased if he or she only reviews or reports the sources he or she agrees with. For example, when surveying Arminianism or Semi-Pelagianism, this student pastor relied on and presented objectively Roger Olsen's and Elmer Town's arguments respectively. Moreover, one cannot report only the facts if he or she uses one type of source. Mentioned in chapter two, every source has some level of subjectivity. Thus, this student pastor cited multiple sources as evidenced in the Review of Literature. Lastly, confidence comes from discovering and disclosing the scholarly and scriptural facts without pride or prejudice. Why? Because facts have no feelings. For example, if Scripture affirms something, one's argument is either fact or fiction. If fact, someone with an issue with Scripture must take it up with the Redeemer not messenger.

Second, the curriculum was meaningful (i.e., relevant). In other words, the curriculum surveyed and studied only the prevalent soteriological schools present in Brown's Creek Baptist

Church. True, other soteriological schools exist that need to be studied. Catholicism, for example, needs to be studied because of its theological differences from Protestantism. To be sure, Brown's Creek Baptist Church is a protestant church. However, Catholicism was not a theological tradition of the congregation. Thus, it was meaningless to study. In short, the curriculum's focus was confirming, challenging, or changing the participants' beliefs.

Furthermore, the curriculum only pertained to the most pressing ministerial issue—the church's soteriological beliefs. Yes, other ministerial issues were observed. The congregation's understanding of missions, for example, is problematic. However, focusing on too many issues at once is not productive but problematic. Perhaps, now that the study of soteriology has concluded, a study on missions will be next.

Lastly, the curriculum was measurable. Was the course successful or unsuccessful at pursuing its goal of bringing theological awareness to biblical soteriology? The curriculum is responsible for the course's success. If, for example, the curriculum was biased in presenting the facts, then the data would have been compromised. How? Because the teacher of the curriculum could have presented the argument for Calvinism more favorably than the arguments for Arminianism and Semi-Pelagianism. However, the quantitative (the survey) and qualitative (the questionnaire) data revealed that the curriculum was unbiased or unapologetic in content. Indeed, following the course, the participants were confirmed, challenged, or changed in their beliefs. Simply, not all the participants affirmed Calvinism or became Calvinists (see above). Interestingly, the participants assumed this student pastor was an Arminian before, during, and after the intervention. That is, this student pastor intentionally masked his soteriological beliefs until after the intervention so that the study would not be compromised (see Implementation).

The Church

What sets the church apart from others is its context and congregants. Appealing for a course to impact the ministerial issue, this student pastor alluded to his own experiences, as well as those from John MacArthur and Mark Dever. However, those experience must be interpreted within their contexts. Indeed, Brown's Creek Baptist Church is much different than Grace Community Church (MacArthur), Capitol Hill Baptist Church (Dever), and Temple Baptist Church (this student pastor's previous church). Those churches are located in Sun Valley, California (Grace Community), Washington, D.C. (Capitol Hill), and Kingsport, Tennessee (Temple). Brown's Creek Baptist Church is located in Union County, a small rural landmass in the Upstate of South Carolina. Furthermore, the congregations of these church are different. Grace Church, Capital Hill, and Temple Baptist have large congregations (1,000+) whereas Brown's Creek has a small congregation (100+). The congregants at Brown's Creek are blue-collar workers whereas the congregants of Grace Community, Capital Hill, and Temple Baptist are a mix of blue-collar and corporate professionals. The most significant differences of the congregants are their beliefs.

The congregation of Brown's Creek Baptist Church was a hodgepodge of soteriological beliefs. Calvinism, Arminianism, and Semi-Pelagianism were all found to be prevalent among the congregation. Grace Church and Capital Hill affirm Calvinism as its soteriology. Temple Baptist is primarily Arminian. Consequently, courses and curriculum at those churches are designed to teach Calvinism or Arminianism. Mentioned in the theoretical section of chapter two, MacArthur and Dever use courses to teach what their church affirms. Accordingly, the course and curriculum were designed especially and exclusively for Brown's Creek Baptist Church. However, unlike MacArthur and Dever, this student pastor's course and curriculum

differs by giving an aerial shot of the church's soteriological beliefs rather than an actual shot of the church's soteriological beliefs. In other words, MacArthur's and Dever's focus is straightforward—teaching their congregations what to believe. This student pastor's focus was broad—teaching his church what is believed. This observation does not mean that MacArthur's or Dever's approach is wrong and this student pastor's approach is right. Rather, the observation suggests that this student pastor's approach (course) was unique (significant) because of his context and congregants. Perhaps, had Jacob Arminius been aware of other soteriological beliefs, he would have remained a Calvinist. Apologetics requires one to know beliefs other than his or her own. Only then, the apologist can be proactive (on the offense) and reactive (on the defense) when encountering someone with differing beliefs.¹⁵⁷

The Study's Survival

The study's significance is contingent on the study's survival. To be sure, history is filled with inventors and their inventions that have been forgotten. Those inventors who have not been forgotten (e.g., Alexander Graham Bell) made a lasting contribution (the telephone). For this student pastor's study to survive or his course to be considered a contribution to soteriology, he must continue to carefully navigate his ministry context. Mentioned in the Introduction, Brown's Creek Baptist Church has a proud, predominately older, and program-oriented congregation. More importantly, the congregation has routinely been abandoned given its revolving door of pastors. Although change is inevitable, those who adapt and adjust can overcome any obstacle. For this student pastor and congregation, the obstacle standing before them is trust and transparency. The church must trust that its current pastor wants the best for the congregation—to see it mature biblically, theologically, and apologetically. Moreover, this student pastor must

¹⁵⁷James K. Beilby, *Thinking Christian Apologetics: What It Is and Why We Do It* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 15.

remain transparent in his intentions. Rather than the church supporting its current pastor's agenda, the pastor's intention must be to bring theological awareness to biblical soteriology—to mature the church spiritually. To ensure that trust and transparency remain consistent despite the inevitable change, the study must adapt and adjust to the ministerial context. What would have happened to Bell or his invention if the telephone did not adapt or adjust? Likely, neither would be remembered. Thus, for this study to survive, it must adapt and adjust.

Learning to Adapt

For this study to survive it must learn to adapt. Adapt means to make suitable for a new use or purpose. Like this student pastor, this study must be adaptable to new ministerial contexts. This student pastor has served in several ministerial positions at different churches in different locations. He has been a Sunday School teacher, youth leader, student pastor, associate pastor, and now senior pastor. Furthermore, this student pastor and lived in three different states: Virginia, Tennessee, and South Carolina. He has also lived in cities and towns, urban and rural. The one constant with change is change. In other words, change is inevitable. Thus, for this study to survive it must be able to change based on its ministerial context.

There are three ways that this study can adapt. First, the study can change its subjects but not its structure. The structure of the study, although not perfectly presented (see above), is intended to bring theological awareness to biblical soteriology by surveying the scholarly and scriptural data. Simply, the study must report only the facts, those that come from a review of literature. Moreover, the literary data must be multifaceted (see above). Hermeneutical practices despite historical positions must remain consistent and coherent. Furthermore, the historical positions, theological precepts, biblical precedents, exegetical problems, and contemporary perspectives must be part of any study of soteriology. Why? Because those themes make up the

foundation of one's soteriological beliefs. The soteriological schools, however, can be replaced with other soteriological schools prevalent in the new context. Molinism, for example, can be added to the study. Catholicism can be studied alongside Arminianism and Calvinism. Whatever the situation demands, the study can select and survey any array of soteriological beliefs.

Second, the study can change its delivery but not its design. Its design is meant to bring theological awareness to biblical soteriology. In other words, the study's design was not to bring awareness to stewardship but to salvation. Mentioned above, this student pastor used a classroom setting to teach the curriculum to the congregants of Brown's Creek Baptist Church. The classroom consisted of tables, chairs, textbooks, and a whiteboard. Yes, Brown's Creek Baptist Church is not unlike any other Southern Baptist church situated in the Bible Belt. That is, those churches adhere to the Baptist Faith and Message while participating in the Cooperative Program. More specifically, a classroom setting is used in Sunday School to convey spiritual truth. However, not every Southern Baptist church, nor all protestant denominational churches, share the same context or congregation. Thus, some churches may find using a teleprompter, a slideshow, or audio/visual tools to capture their audience's attention. Moreover, some presenters may find it appropriate to wear a suit and tie during the presentation. In other words, using a whiteboard and dressing casually is not the only way to deliver the study. Furthermore, a classroom setting is not the only option available or appropriate. Following the apostle Paul, "who became all things to all people so that by all possible means he might save some," the presenter must adapt his delivery to fit his context and congregation (1 Cor 9:22).

Lastly, the study can change its measurables but not its methods. The method of the study was to confirm, challenge, or change the congregant's soteriological beliefs. To do so, a curriculum was devised while a survey and questionnaire was distributed. Admittedly, the

Institutional Review Board restricted this student pastor from engaging in personal interviews or group studies. Nonetheless, a curriculum must maintain the method despite the various ways one may use to collect the qualitative and quantitative data. How else would one confirm, challenge, or change a congregation's soteriological beliefs apart from a scholarly and scriptural survey from a review of literature? However, the survey and questionnaire can and should be adapted to fit the ministerial context. Yes, a survey and questionnaire ought to be used as it pertains to this study's methodology. Why? Because of the same reason given by the Institutional Review Board—the pastor holds a position of authority over his congregants. However, the survey and questionnaire will inevitably be different if the soteriological schools present in another church are different from Brown's Creek Baptist Church. Noteworthy, the survey questions still must seek to establish the congregation's level of soteriological identity, soteriological intelligence, and soteriological interest. Likewise, the questionnaire must seek to establish the participants' actual and acquired soteriological knowledge. Two identical questionnaires, a pre-questionnaire and a post-questionnaire, must be used to accurately measure the change of the participant's actual and acquired soteriological knowledge.

Learning to Adjust

Survival is about adapting and learning to adjust. Adjusting means to alter in order to achieve a desired goal. Like this student pastor, who has made adjustments to complete his doctorate while raising a family and leading a church, this study must be adjusted to accommodate schedules and situations. During his time at Liberty University, this student pastor has faced tragedy (losing his father to a drug overdose), treachery (having to leave a church), and testing (leading a church through a pandemic) while raising two boys and maintaining a healthy marriage. Pursuing his doctorate has been no small feat. To be sure, the study was done during a

pandemic that has caused uncertainty. However, change is inevitable. Thus, this study must adjust when change occurs. There are two adjustments that can be made without jeopardizing the study.

First, the study must adjust to scheduling changes. Mentioned above, participants in the study have lives outside of the church. Many have secular jobs, families, and hobbies or interests that take up their time. Thus, the study must be mindful of scheduling conflicts. There is no study without willing participants. If the study is to be successful, it must incorporate the participants in the scheduling decisions. This is done in two ways. One, consult with the participants collectively. This will provide a consensus and cooperation among the participants. Two, consult with the participant individually, via telephone or text messages. This allows the presenter to make accommodations to his schedule prior to consulting with the participants collectively. In short, compromise, consensus, and cooperation will aid in adjusting to changes. All three were present during this study (see above).

Second, the study must adjust to situational changes. Covid 19 is an example of a situational change. Also, deaths, births, accidents, etc. are examples of situations that may occur during the study. Unfortunately, a pandemic is a rare occasion that can make any study difficult to complete. However, being dedicated and deliberate makes the difference. In the case of this study, this student pastor was dedicated to the study—actively making situational changes as they occurred. For example, he moved the study up three weeks from what was planned. Furthermore, this student pastor was deliberate in his approach of the study—working ahead in case unforeseen changes occurred. Thus, for this type of study to survive, it must adjust.

The Study's Summary

In sum, the study was a success with shortcomings. The study's successes can be understood pastorally and personally. Pastorally, the study influenced the participants biblically,

theologically, and apologetically, which made an impact on this student pastor personally. The study's shortcomings were information overload and time overlooked. Simply, the study gave too much information in too short of a time frame. A solution is to revisit the study and break up each day or week into different segments or studies. Aside from the study's success and shortcomings, its significance cannot be overstated. Indeed, the study developed a course specific to the ministry context of Brown's Creek Baptist Church. More importantly, the study impacted the church's beliefs by bringing theological awareness to biblical soteriology. To survive, the study must learn to adapt and adjust. For this to occur, this student pastor and congregation must be committed to trust and transparency. Consistency is the antidote to change. For the church and the eighteen participants of this study, thank you for trusting this student pastor with your time. It is his hope that the theological transparency utilized in this study helped spiritually equip each one of you "in respect to salvation" (1 Pet 2:2), and "to do good works which God prepared in advance for [you] to do" (Eph 2:10).

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 10, 2021

David Head
Dietmar Schulze

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY20-21-1010 A Study of Soteriology

Dear David Head and Dietmar Schulze,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. **This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.**

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason:

Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word research with the word project throughout both documents.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX A

Project Participants Needed

A Study of Soteriology

- Are you an adult member of Brown's Creek Baptist Church?
- Do you want to have an established biblical understand of salvation?

If you answered **yes** to either of these questions, you may be eligible to participate in course project study.

The purpose of this project study is introduce, investigate, and interact with the congregation's beliefs about salvation by fairly synthesizing the relevant scholarly and scriptural data. More specifically, the study is a literary compilation (course) comprised of the historical perspectives, theological precepts, biblical precedents, exegetical problems, and contemporary positions associated with Calvinism, Arminianism, and Semi-Pelagianism. The course will either confirm, challenge, or correct your soteriological beliefs.

The study is being conducted at Brown's Creek Baptist Church

David Head, a doctoral candidate in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Please contact David Head at [REDACTED] for more information.

APPENDIX B

Title of the Project: A Study of Soteriology: A Commentary, Course, and Conclusion of Brown's Creek Baptist Church's Soteriological Beliefs

Principal Investigator: David Head, Senior Pastor of Brown's Creek Baptist Church and DMIN Student at Liberty University School of Divinity

Invitation to be Part of a Project Study

You are invited to participate in a project study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age and a member of Brown's Creek Baptist Church. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to introduce and investigate the common beliefs about salvation that is prevalent at Brown's Creek Baptist Church.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Consent to be present at study for five consecutive weeks on Saturday from 11:00am to 12:00pm.
2. Consent to participate in the surveys and questionnaires for research purposes and allow your answers to be used for the principal investigator DMIN thesis.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

The Participant: Learning more about the Doctrine of Salvation. The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study are knowing God more intimately and the salvation He provides more intently. In other words, participants will grow spiritually in their faith and gain knowledge of their faith.

The Principal Investigator: Learning the congregation's beliefs about salvation while obtaining his doctorate. In short, the principal investigator will be educated on the congregation's beliefs and subsequently equipped to pastor them more effectively. The principal investigator will also earn his doctrinal degree.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. The congregants participating in this study must not be afraid to disagree with the pastor. His role in the study is merely to present the scholarly and scriptural facts for the participants to evaluate on their own. The pastor's chief concern is spiritual development – that each participant can accurately describe and adequately defend his or her beliefs.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses to surveys and questionnaires will be anonymous.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in group settings. While discouraged, other members of the group may share what was discussed among participants with persons outside of the group.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Brown's Creek Baptist Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

Withdrawal: Anonymous Survey and Questionnaire Project If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation, and do not submit your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Withdrawal: All Other Project If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is David Head. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dietmar Schulze, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a project participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, [REDACTED].

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The projector will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The projector has my permission to audio-record/video-record/photograph me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX C

SOTERIOLOGY: WHAT IS SALVATION?

Have you ever found yourself thinking these things, this study is for you!

“What does the Bible say about salvation?”

“Why is theology important?”

Join us as we discover and study what the Bible says about Soteriology!

This will be a 7week study every Saturday starting:

September 4, 2021-October 16, 2021

at Brown's Creek Baptist Church

from 11 AM - 12 PM

taught by Pastor David Head

APPENDIX D

A STUDY OF SOTERIOLOGY

SUBJECT	TEACHER	LOCATION	DATE
The Beliefs about Salvation	David Head	Brown's Creek Baptist Church	4-Sep to 16-OCT (1-Aug to 7-Aug)

OVERVIEW

This study is a scholarly and scriptural overview of the prevalent soteriological beliefs expressed by the congregation of Brown's Creek Baptist Church. More specifically, the study is a literary compilation (curriculum) comprised of the historical perspectives, theological precepts, biblical precedents, exegetical problems, and contemporary positions associated with Calvinism, Arminianism, and Semi-Pelagianism.

WEEK	OBJECTIVE	APPLICATION
WEEK ONE HISTORICAL POSITIONS	Surveying the Historical Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Calvin • Jacob Arminius • John Cassian 	The Value of Looking Back <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Contributors • The Controversies
WEEK TWO THEOLOGICAL PRECEPTS	Surveying the Theological Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calvinism • Arminianism • Semi-Pelagianism 	The Value of Knowing Beliefs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclose • Discuss • Debate
WEEK THREE BIBLICAL PRECEDENTS	Surveying the Biblical Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God's Sovereignty • Election • Predestination 	The Value of Reading the Bible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Position • The Proof
WEEK FOUR EXEGETICAL PROBLEMS	Surveying the Exegetical Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Problems • Controversial Passage 	The Value of Studying the Bible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Historical Context • The Cultural Context • The Literary Context

WEEK	OBJECTIVE	APPLICATION
WEEK FIVE CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES	Surveying the Contemporary Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Debate • Current Decision 	The Value of Applying the Bible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging • Accepting • Advancing

A STUDY OF SOTERIOLOGY

SUBJECT	TEACHER	LOCATION	DATE
Historical Positions	David Head	Brown's Creek Baptist Church	11-Sep (2-Aug)

OVERVIEW

Week one will introduce, investigate, and interact with the historical perspectives of Reformed/Calvinist Theology, Freewill/Arminian Theology, and Hybrid/Semi-Pelagian Theology. Simply, the questions of who, what, when, where, and why will be answered. Who were the main contributors? What were the major controversies? Where did these contributors preside and when did the controversies take place? In sum, why were the contributors influential and the controversies important?

REFORMED/ CALVINIST THEOLOGY	FREEWILL/ ARMINIAN THEOLOGY	HYBRID/ SEMI-PELAGIAN THEOLOGY
The Contributor? John Calvin (1509-1564)	The Contributor? Jacob Arminius (1560-1609)	The Contributor? John Cassian (360-435)
The Contribution? Father of the Reformation	The Contribution? Founder of Arminianism	The Contribution? Founder of Semi-Pelagianism

The Controversy? God's Sovereignty vs Human Freewill	The Controversy? God's Sovereignty vs Human Freewill	The Controversy? God's Sovereignty vs Human Freewill
The Cause? God Chooses Salvation	The Cause? Man Chooses Salvation	The Cause? Both Complete Salvation
The Conclusion? Synod of Dort (Revised the Belief)	The Conclusion? Synod of Dort (Rejected the Belief)	The Conclusion? Council of Orange (Rejected the Belief)

A STUDY OF SOTERIOLOGY

SUBJECT

Theological Precepts

TEACHER

David Head

LOCATION

Brown's Creek Baptist Church

DATE

18-Sep (3-Aug)

OVERVIEW

Week two will introduce, investigate, and interact with the theological precepts of Reformed/Calvinist Theology, Freewill/Arminian Theology, and Hybrid/Semi-Pelagian Theology. Simply, the question "What do they believe?" will be answered.

REFORMED/ CALVINIST THEOLOGY

FREEWILL/ ARMINIAN THEOLOGY

HYBRID/ SEMI-PELAGIAN THEOLOGY

Total Depravity Man is Spiritually Unable to choose God	Total Depravity Man is Spiritually Unable to choose God	Tragically Damaged Man is Spiritually Able to choose God
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Unconditional Election God Chooses Salvation (Monergism)	Conditional Election Man Chooses Salvation (Prevenient Grace)	Conditional Election Both Complete Salvation (Synergism)
Limited Atonement (Particular Redemption) Christ Died for the Elect	Unlimited Atonement (Potential Redemption) Christ Died for the Believer	Unlimited Atonement (Possible Redemption) Christ Died for the World
Irresistible Grace Regeneration → Repentance	Resistible Grace Repentance → Regeneration	Resistible Grace Repentance → Regeneration
Perseverance of the Saints God is Responsible for Eternal Security	Undecided Man is Responsible for Eternal Security	“Once Saved Always Saved” Both are Responsible for Eternal Security

A STUDY OF SOTERIOLOGY

SUBJECT

Biblical Precedents

TEACHER

David Head

LOCATION

Brown's Creek Baptist
Church

DATE

25-Sep (4-Aug)

OVERVIEW

Week three will introduce, investigate, and interact with the biblical precedents of Reformed/Calvinist Theology, Freewill/Arminian Theology, and Hybrid/Semi-Pelagian Theology. Simply, the question “Why do they believe?” will be answered.

REFORMED/ CALVINIST THEOLOGY

FREEWILL/ ARMINIAN THEOLOGY

HYBRID/ SEMI-PELAGIAN THEOLOGY

<p>Total Depravity</p> <p>Man is Spiritually Unable to choose</p> <p>Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:3</p>	<p>Total Depravity</p> <p>Man is Spiritually Unable to choose God</p> <p>Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:3</p>	<p>Tragically Damaged</p> <p>Man is Spiritually Able to choose God</p> <p>Genesis 1:27</p>
<p>Unconditional Election</p> <p>Monergism</p> <p>Romans 8:29-30</p> <p>(Foreknowledge = God's Favor, cf. Amos 3:2)</p>	<p>Conditional Election</p> <p>Prevenient Grace</p> <p>Romans 8:29-30</p> <p>(Foreknowledge = Man's Future)</p>	<p>Conditional Election</p> <p>Synergism</p> <p>John 6:35-40</p>
<p>Limited Atonement (Particular Redemption)</p> <p>Genesis 25; Malachi 1; Ephesians 1; Romans 9</p> <p>(Individual Election)</p>	<p>Unlimited Atonement (Potential Redemption)</p> <p>Genesis 25; Malachi 1; Ephesians 1; Romans 9</p> <p>(Corporate Election)</p>	<p>Unlimited Atonement (Possible Redemption)</p> <p>John 3:16</p>
<p>Irresistible Grace</p> <p>Above Scripture (God's Decision)</p>	<p>Resistible Grace</p> <p>Above Scripture (Man's Decision)</p>	<p>Resistible Grace</p> <p>Above Scripture (Man's Decision)</p>
<p>Perseverance of the Saints</p> <p>Romans 8:38-39</p> <p>(God's Responsibility)</p>	<p>Undecided</p> <p>Hebrews 6:4-8</p> <p>(Man's Responsibility)</p>	<p>"Once Saved Always Saved"</p> <p>John 10:27-28</p> <p>(Both Responsibility)</p>

A STUDY OF SOTERIOLOGY

SUBJECT	TEACHER	LOCATION	DATE
Exegetical Problems	David Head	Brown's Creek Baptist Church	2-OCT (5-Aug)

OVERVIEW

Week four will introduce, investigate, and interact with the exegetical problems of Reformed/Calvinist Theology, Freewill/Arminian Theology, and Hybrid/Semi-Pelagian Theology. Simply, the question “What does Scripture say?” will be answered by examining a controversial passage, Romans 9. Either one Theology will be right or all will be wrong.

ROMANS 9	MEANING	APPLICATION
HISTORICAL-CULTURAL CONTEXT & LITERARY CONTEXT	The Context of Romans 9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Author • The Audience • The About 	The Reader of Romans 9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Significance of Salvation • The Source of Salvation • The Strategy of Salvation
PAUL’S ANGUISH (9:1-5)	Study of Romans 9:1-5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul’s Pain • Israel’s Plight 	Significance of Romans 9:1-5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salvation is not Guaranteed
PAUL’S ARGUMENT (9:6-16)	Study of Romans 9:6-16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God’s Promises • God’s Purposes 	Significance of Romans 9:6-16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salvation is God Given
PAUL’S APPLICATION (9:14-29)	Study of Romans 9:14-29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God’s Power • God’s Prerogative 	Significance of Romans 9:14-29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salvation is God Granted
PAUL’S ANALYSIS (9:30-33)	Study of Romans 9:30-33 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gentile Pursuit • Israel’s Pursuit 	Significance of Romans 9:30-33 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salvation is God Gifted

A STUDY OF SOTERIOLOGY

SUBJECT	TEACHER	LOCATION	DATE
Contemporary Perspectives	David Head	Brown’s Creek Baptist Church	9-OCT (6-Aug)

OVERVIEW

Week four will introduce, investigate, and interact with the contemporary positions of Reformed/Calvinist Theology, Freewill/Arminian Theology, and Hybrid/Semi-Pelagian Theology. Simply, the question “Where do we go from here?” will be answered.

THE CHOICE	THE CONVERSATION	THE CONSEQUENCE
BE CONFUSED	If we say... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Why understand soteriology?” • I didn’t comprehend the study?” • “Why is salvation an issue?” 	The result will be... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complacency • Contentment • Confusion
BE CONTROVERSIAL	If we say... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I reject the study!” • “I rely on my sources!” • “I believe differently!” 	The result will be... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controversy • Contradiction
BE CHALLENGED	If we say... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I didn’t know that before?” • “I thought _____ was true?” 	The result will be... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contemplation • Consideration • Consultation
BE CHANGED	If we say... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I believe different now!” • “This study has opened my eyes!” 	The result will be... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correction • Concern
BE CONFIRMED	If we say... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I already knew this stuff!” • “My soteriology is now settled!” 	The result will be... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence • Championing

APPENDIX E

Intervention Survey

This survey is completely anonymous, please do not provide your name or seek participation from others. In a brief statement (one or two sentences) please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and with all honesty. The aim of this survey is to establish a general consensus of the congregation's beliefs about the doctrine of salvation.

1. What are Brown's Creek Baptist Church's Beliefs about Salvation?
2. What is your beliefs about Salvation?
3. What is the definition of Election?
- 4 What is the definition of Predestination?
5. What is the definition of Sovereignty?
6. What is the correlation between the above three terms?
7. What are some questions you have about salvation?

APPENDIX F

Intervention Questionnaire

This questionnaire is completely anonymous, please do not provide your name or seek participation from others. In a brief statement (one or two sentences) please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and with all honesty. This questionnaire will be given twice, once before and once after the five-week intervention. The aim of these questionnaires is to evaluate the intervention itself.

1. What is Calvinism/Reformed Theology to you?
2. What is Arminianism/Freewill Theology to you?
3. What is Semi-Pelagianism/Hybrid Theology to you?
4. What are your thoughts about Election?
5. What are your thoughts about Predestination?
6. What are your thoughts about God's Sovereignty?

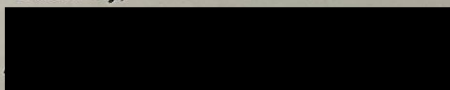
APPENDIX G

Union County Historical Society

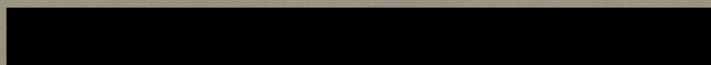
January 3, 2022

The Union County Museum and The Union County Historical Society has given David Shawn Head permission to publish a copy of a picture (page 114) published in Images of America, Union County by Peter Triggiani and Amber Jackson from material belonging to the museum. The picture is of John Fant, J.C. Dunean, and believed to be Emsile Nicholson, members of the Union Billionaires Club. The fourth person is unknown at this time.

Sincerely,



*Rozelle P. Bramlett,
Executive Director
Union County Museum*



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