

Teacher's guide  
Introduction to  
Reformed Systematic Theology

An outline based on the book **SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY**, Louis Berkhof

[PDF](#)

by  
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One is sometimes glad to not be a great theologian;  
one might so easily mistake it for being a good Christian. <sup>1</sup>  
- C.S. Lewis

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## To the teacher

Comments under the headings are Roger Smalling's summaries and supplements of Berkhof's explanations in a more modern format and style. These will help the teacher focus the presentation on essential aspects.

The students should have read the page in Berkhof that follow the lesson title.

Special instructions to the teacher are in blocks, like this.

Handouts relative to the course are at the end of the manual. These are required reading for the relevant lesson. Most are by Smalling and touch on issues that may be controversial or of greater interest than in Berkhof's day.

Glossary: This should be read by the students before proceeding with the course. It will help familiarize them with terms in the explanations.

Page numbers for reading assignments in Berkhof correspond to the electronic version at: <https://bit.ly/2LWmXTI> If the teacher uses another version of Berkhof, or the printed book, he will need to correspond the page numbers with that version.

Some of the lessons are long or may involve complex subjects requiring more class time. The teacher may divide lessons into as many sessions as necessary.

Most Scripture references have *ScreenTips*. Some lack these because the text is too long to fit into the dialogue box allowed by the software.

The Bible used is the English Standard Version. The teacher may use another version.

The student's manual is separate, with spaces for notes. The teacher can use their own discretion whether to require this as homework.

## Introduction: What is systematic theology?

Systematic theology is a study of Christian doctrines in their relationship to one another in a logical, consistent system.

### Why study systematic theology?

- 1) A grasp of biblical theology as a system allows a teacher to present truth with greater conviction and impact. It reveals the proportion of values between doctrines. Not all truths have the same importance. Christians who major on minors show a failure to grasp biblical revelation as an overall system.
- 2) Systematic theology helps a person detect error. This has been the experience of those who have taken a course on this subject.
- 3) It helps us understand the history of the church in its theological struggles throughout the centuries, as well as recognize differences between denominations.
- 4) It is a boost to faith. The theology of the Bible is an intricate system of related teachings in a logical relationship with every other doctrine. Over a period of 1600 years with more than twenty writers in three languages, these teachings blend together into a coherent and consistent system. As a phenomenon, this could have only one possible source — God!

### Materials

- **ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION BIBLE**
- **SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY** by Christian Reformed theologian Louis Berkhof, edition 1996, electronic format, PDF: <https://bit.ly/2LWmXTI>
- Handout essays by Roger Smalling

#### Why Berkhof's Systematic Theology?

Berkhof's style is concise and to the point, avoiding the wordiness of other systematics. The well-define outline of key points helps the student. Refutations of erroneous views are presented in a factual and non offensive way. One volume covers it all.

### What does the Bible say about the importance of doctrinal studies?

#### The whole counsel of God

The apostle Paul tells us he did not hesitate to announce *the whole counsel of God*. (Acts 20:27) We conclude that the entire content of the divine plan of redemption is knowable and credible. Paul made it clear to the Ephesian elders it was their responsibility to understand that plan.

#### The apostolic example

The first thing the apostles taught new converts was sound doctrine. [Acts 2:42](#)

#### Identification of error

We are warned to avoid those who teach contrary to sound doctrine. [Romans 16:17](#)  
This implies the ability to distinguish good doctrine from bad.

We are also warned to avoid those who tend to be carried about by fad doctrines.  
[Ephesians 4:14](#)

The apostle John tells us to reject religious teachers with false doctrine regarding the person of Jesus Christ. [2 John 9](#)

### **What it means to be a good servant.**

Paul describes a good minister as one who is *trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed*. (1Timothy 4:6) From this we deduce it is impossible to be a trained gospel minister without a thorough study of sound doctrine.

### **Contending for the faith**

Jude exhorts us to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.  
[Jude 3](#)

The words *the faith* refer to the entire body of teaching that comprises Christianity. Jude insists there is a body of teaching we can understand clearly enough to defend. Those who pervert that system of doctrine, particularly people who assail the sovereignty of God and his grace, are destined for condemnation.

## **Why do some disdain systematic theology?**

### **Supposed ambiguity**

Some have the attitude that theology is an ambiguous subject like philosophy and assume a diversity of systems supports that attitude.

If this were true, we would have to say that the Bible is obscure; a revelation to hinder truth; that God is incapable of clear communication. Worse, God created man with the capacity for logic and then gave him an irrational revelation that condemns mankind for not believing it.

### **Diversity of theological systems**

Does a variety of systems insinuate it is impossible to know which is correct?

Let us suppose a math teacher presents a problem to ten students and they all give different answers. What does this prove about the answer? Nothing. Several possibilities exist: Either one student got it right or they all got it wrong.

What does it prove about the difficulty of the problem? Nothing. It could be simply that the students are poor students. Or the teacher is incompetent.

The same is true of any subject. The mere existence of different systems proves nothing nor does it indicate theology is difficult or that different systems are equally valid.

Learning biblical theology is like learning a language or musical instrument. At first the various elements seem disjointed and unrelated. Then comes a day when like an epiphany the student sees the system as a whole. It becomes obvious and the student feels in control.

## **The beauty of hermeneutics**

Different systems of theology have their roots in erroneous methods of investigation. These are logic errors. Correct hermeneutics will reveal one valid system of biblical theology, commonly known as *Reformed*.

### **Indifference**

Some consider theology unimportant because they fail to see its practical consequences. This attitude is self contradictory because it is a doctrine in itself. Moreover, it betrays a lack of zeal for truth.

### **Is it possible for more than one correct system of theology to exist?**

No, because Christians believe only one God exists and one plan of salvation. Theology is a study of these. Therefore, there is only one correct system.

This, of course, does not imply we know everything about God. We know that those things revealed about him do not contradict each other at any point. It is impossible that two mutually exclusive theological systems could both be correct about God.

The same is true about salvation. God has not provided a variety of saviors, nor distinct means of salvation, according to the whim of man.

## Glossary

**ANTHROPOLOGY:** (Greek: *anthropos* = man) The study of man. In theology, this refers to doctrines relative to our origin, nature and spiritual condition.

**ANTHROPOMORPHIC:** (Greek: *anthropos* = man; *morphos* = form) Having human characteristics. In theology, it sometimes refers to the view that God, though a spirit, is in the shape of a man. Scripture uses aspects of human anatomy to express divine characteristics or actions such as *the hand of the Lord*. These are analogies, not to be taken literally.

**ANTINOMIANISM:** (Greek: *anti* = against; *nomos* = law) A heresy stating that the law of God expressed in the Old Testament has no relevance for Christians.

**APOSTASY:** Falling away from the Christian faith entirely.

**ARMINIANISM:** A system of theology elaborated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by a Dutch pastor, Jacob Arminius. He taught *moral free will, conditional election, universal sacrifice of Christ, insecurity of the believer*. He denied *effectual call* and declared the possibility of Christians losing their salvation. Various branches of the evangelical movement have subscribed to this system, such as Pentecostals, Nazarenes and Methodists.

**ATONEMENT, LIMITED:** The view that Christ died to save the elect only and accomplished that purpose fully. Salvation is applied to the elect, not merely provided as a possibility. This view, sometimes called *particular redemption*, is held by the Reformed branch of theology.

**ATONEMENT, UNIVERSAL:** The view that Christ died to provide a possibility of salvation for everyone, depending on individual free will. In this sense, salvation is not an accomplishment by Christ but a provision, depending on man's response.

**ATTRIBUTES, COMMUNICABLE:** Those attributes of God that can logically be held in common between himself and finite creatures, such as character qualities: love, hate, righteousness, etc.

**ATTRIBUTES, INCOMMUNICABLE:** Those attributes of God unique to himself that cannot be held in common with finite creatures. These include omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence.

**CALL, EFFECTUAL:** A Reformed doctrine of grace affirming that God draws his elect to Christ irresistibly through the preaching of the gospel. Sometimes called *irresistible grace*.

**CALL, UNIVERSAL:** The call by God to repentance through the preaching of the gospel, regardless of who is elect or not. Sometimes labeled *general call*.

**CALVINISM:** The system of theology that typified the reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, elaborated by French theologian John Calvin, emphasizing the sovereignty of God in salvation. In opposition to Arminianism, it affirms *total depravity, unconditional election, particular redemption, effectual call* and *preservation of the elect*.

**COVENANT OF GRACE:** The divine agreement made with mankind in which God grants life and blessing to his elect on the basis of grace alone.

**COVENANT OF WORKS:** The divine agreement made with mankind in which God offers life and blessing to humanity on the basis of perfect obedience.

**DOCTRINES OF GRACE:** The doctrines of the reformation having to do with the application of divine grace for the salvation of man. See [CALVINISM](#).

**ECCLESIOLOGY:** (Greek: *ekklesia* = assembly) The theology of church government.

**ELECTION, UNCONDITIONAL:** A doctrine of grace affirming that God chose certain people for salvation before the foundation of the world, without regard of foreseen conditions they could fulfill.

**ESCATOLOGY:** (Greek: *eschatos* = end) The study of prophetic events leading to the second coming of Christ and final judgment.

**FEDERALTHEOLOGY:** An aspect of biblical theology in which the consequences of an individual's actions fall on their descendants. That individual is sometimes referred to as "federal head." See [ORIGINAL SIN](#) as the key example.

**FREE WILL:** The ability of the will to make choices without external compulsions. Views about limitations of the will vary according to different branches of theology.

**GRACE, COMMON:** Divine benevolence for humanity in general for the preservation of the human race, such as provision of food, rain or other such blessings. This does not include personal salvation and is sometimes called *general grace*.

**GRACE, SPECIAL:** Divine favor for personal salvation.

**HERMENEUTICS:** The science of the interpretation of literature; in theology, the rules for correct interpretation of biblical passages.

**IMMUTABILITY:** Unchangeable. In theology it refers to God's character as well as the unchangeable nature of divine decrees relative to salvation of the elect.

**IMPUTATION:** The central aspect of the doctrine of justification, referring to the divine decree to attribute to the believer the free gift of the perfect righteousness of Christ. This doctrine is developed in Romans Chapter 4.

IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS: Synonym of *imputation*.

JUSTIFICATION: A divine declaration relative to salvation in which God forgives a repentant sinner and imputes the righteousness of Christ. It means legally *declared* righteous, not *made* righteous.

LEGALISM: The practice of moral law as a means of acquiring salvation rather than through faith alone in Christ alone.

MEANS OF GRACE: The divine use of practical means to communicate grace. Regarding unbelievers, the preaching of the gospel is a means. Among believers, reading of Scripture, prayer and ministries of the church are means of grace for their spiritual growth.

OMNIPOTENCE: The divine attribute of being almighty.

OMNISCIENCE: The divine attribute of knowing everything.

OMNIPRESENCE: The divine attribute of being infinite.

ORDO SALUTIS: The order of events in salvation. In theology, this term generally refers to the relationship of regeneration to faith.

ORIGINAL SIN: The doctrine referring to the fall of Adam in which Adam's sin, including all its effects and consequences, is attributed to the entire human race.

PNEUMATOLOGY: (Greek: *pneuma* = spirit) The study of the Holy Spirit, his person, deity, spiritual gifts and work in the lives of believers.

PREDESTINATION: The doctrine affirming that all of reality is planned by God from before the creation of the world. In reference to salvation, it refers to the eternal destiny of people. In this sense, predestination may be viewed in two parts: election and reprobation.

PRESERVATION: The divine work of preserving the elect from falling away from the faith.

PROVIDENCE: The divine arrangement of circumstances to guarantee the outcome of God's decrees.

REDEMPTION: The basic meaning is *to buy back*, based on the Old Testament concept of purchasing slaves in order to free them. In theology, it refers to the divine work of "purchasing" the elect from slavery to sin through the sacrifice of Christ.

REFORMED: The 16<sup>th</sup> century movement that attempted to reform the Catholic Church by encouraging it to conform its doctrine and practices to the Bible. The Catholic rejection of this attempt resulted in a new movement called Protestant.

REPROBATION: The divine decree to *pass by* some people in election and leave them in the sinful condition they themselves have chosen, thus leading to their final judgment.

SANCTIFICATION: The process in the life of believers of learning to live holy lives.

SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD: The attribute of God in which he governs and controls everything.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY: A Reformed doctrine affirming that sin has permeated every aspect of a human being, so as to render him unable to produce any spiritual good that would contribute to his salvation. It does not deny that the sinner is capable of good social conduct or even of religious devotion. It insists that any good work done by a sinner is unacceptable to God because it proceeds from a corrupted source.

UNIVERSALISM: A heresy affirming that all humanity, without exception, will be saved. (Not to be confused with Universal Atonement.)

## Lesson 1: Existence of God – pp.20-21; 26-28

**Purpose:** Explain the two main approaches to apologetics: evidentialism and presuppositionalism.

### **General versus special revelation**

Theologians separate revelation about the existence of God into two categories: General and special.

**General revelation** refers to those aspects of the created order we call *nature* of which we are a part. This includes the created order as a whole along with the human sense of morality we call conscience. For this reason, general revelation is often called *natural* revelation.

**Special revelation** refers to those truths that cannot be deduced by observation of the created order. Jesus Christ and the Bible represent these.

### **Evidentialism**

The view that fallen man, by his own unaided reason, perceives the existence of God through natural evidences: creation and conscience. The knowledge of God is therefore revealed to every sentient human being.

Mankind, however, suppresses this knowledge to maintain autonomy from God and a preference for ungodliness. The means of suppression are philosophy and pagan religion. This warrants the wrath of God on mankind. The key Bible texts for this view are [Romans 1:18-22](#); [Psalm 19:1](#)

#### **Strengths and weaknesses**

Evidentialism finds overwhelming support in Romans 1. Paul declares in four different ways that the evidence is clearly revealed to everyone so that no excuse exists for atheism and agnosticism.

Critics claim that evidentialists fail to take into account the corruption of fallen man. Sinners tend to reject anything that would threaten autonomy from God. Critics also claim that evidentialism starts with the autonomous reason of man, a wrong starting point.

Evidentialists reject this on the basis of Romans 1, that autonomous reason is not sinful. Sin enters as people use their reason to suppress the revelation they perceive in nature and conscience.

### **Presuppositionalism – pp.20-21**

The view that the evidence of God does indeed exist but fallen man is incapable of perceiving it unless enlightened by God through Scripture.

Presuppositionalism says we must presuppose the existence of God, and through that we will see how theism corresponds to the real world. Presuppositionalists insists that it is a manifestation of our corrupt nature to start with our own autonomous reason.

### Strengths

Presuppositionalism underscores strongly man's fallen nature and his total depravity and inability. It claims that man cannot understand natural revelation for what it is except through Scripture. It also strongly insists that it is wrong to begin the process of reasoning by our own minds, instead of starting with God.

### Weaknesses

It fails to account adequately for Romans 1:18-22. The assumption that it is sinful to start with one's own reason is not found in Scripture. To make the decision to not "start" with God, a person must use his or her reason to do so. This tends toward anti-intellectualism.

The most serious weakness in presuppositionalism, with its insistence on presupposing the existence of God as a starting point is this question: With which god shall we start and why? If the presuppositionalist refers to natural revelation at this point, he has contradicted himself and is no longer a presuppositionalist.

### Berkhof on apologetics

It will be noted by the student that Berkhof takes the presuppositionalist approach. His feelings are so strong at this point that he fails to present the evidentialist view adequately. He even mocks it in part. The teacher therefore should supplement Berkhof, presenting the pros and cons of each position.

Berkhof gives the impression, by using the name of Schleiermacher, that reasoning on the part of mankind is humanism. The insinuation is that Schleiermacher is liberal. Therefore anything he says is liberalism.

It is historically false that everything Schleiermacher said was liberal. Schleiermacher asserted the moral argument (conscience) which leads to God. Aquinas and others used this argument and they were not liberals. Berkhof commits here the fallacy of guilt by association.

Discuss the difference between rational theistic proofs and the inability of man to submit to God. The evidence exists and is sufficient. Carnal man, because of his pride, will not admit it.

Explain here the two grounds of liberal theology: pantheism and relativism.

Pantheism: God is everything.

Relativism: Truth is relative to the individual and is merely a subjective experience.

### The five "proofs" of Aquinas – pp.26-28

Thomas Aquinas, the 12<sup>th</sup> century Italian bishop, d.1274, expounded on five "proofs" of God's existence in his monumental work, **SUMMA THEOLOGIAE** (Summary of Theology).

**Ontological:** The concept of perfection exists and therefore a perfect being exists.

**Cosmological:** Argument from cause and effect. There is a creation, therefore a creator must exist. This argument also incorporates *the unmoved mover* concept, first

expounded by Aristotle. It means that material objects have no power of motion or change in themselves. This power must therefore be acquired from a source that is neither material nor moved by anything else. This can only be God.

**Teleological:** Argument from the complexity and harmony of creation.

**Ethnological:** Every culture believes there is a God.

**Moral:** A sense of moral law exists in everyone. We call this call the conscience. If there is universal moral law, there must be a universal lawgiver.

Note: The cosmological and moral arguments are the only ones used by Scripture, Romans 1:18-20; 2:13-16

**From this lesson we learn...**

- General revelation is God showing his existence through nature and conscience.
- Special revelation is God's revelation of himself to the elect only through the knowledge of Jesus Christ.
- Presuppositionalism is an approach to apologetics that presupposes the existence of God without reference to evidences.
- Evidentialism is the approach to apologetics based on evidence in nature and human conscience.
- The five proofs of Aquinas for the existence of God are: Ontological, cosmological, teleological, moral, ethnological.

**Homework reading:** Handout, Smalling's [Debate on apologetics](#); Berkhof pp.61-79 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 2: Divine attributes – pp.61-79

**Purpose:** Define the incommunicable attributes versus communicable to form a concept of God as opposed to that of liberalism or other unbiblical movements. Also, to show the balance between immanence and transcendence.

### **Grounds for believing in the attributes of God**

Nature and Scripture are the two grounds for deducing God's attributes. Paul declares that certain of God's attributes are plainly revealed from creation. [Romans 1:20](#)

Thus, nature is the first declaration of God's attributes. This is called *natural revelation*.

Thomas Aquinas<sup>2</sup> in **SUMMA DE SUMMA TEOLOGICA**, expressed that the incommunicable attributes can be deduced by reason alone without reference to Scripture.

#### **Influence of liberal theology**

Immanuel Kant<sup>3</sup> attacked the five proofs of Aquinas and claimed to have refuted them. Other theologians followed suit, which led to a denial or de-emphasis on the transcendence of God.

Friedrich Schleiermacher, a father of liberal theology, taught that all religion was a subjective and personal question and not deducible from any objective considerations. This, of course, is a clear contradiction of Paul's teaching in Romans 1.

### **Incommunicable attributes (natural) - pp.61-68**

Note: Berkhof provides adequate scriptural reference for these points that the teacher may use for support. It is unnecessary to repeat them here.

The term *incommunicable* means that which finite creatures such as humans, cannot hold in common with God. Sometimes these are called *natural attributes*. The key ones are:

- Omnipotence: God is almighty.
- Omniscience: God is all knowing.
- Omnipresence: God is infinite.

These three are easiest to understand and remember. In addition to these:

- 1) Spirituality: God is a spirit, [John 4:24](#). This means he has no adequate analogy in anything physical.
- 2) Immutable: God cannot change in his essence and person. This does not mean
- 3) Immobility. God can act without change in character or essence.
- 4) Eternal: God has no end or beginning.
- 5) Simplicity: God has no parts. He is spirit, not composed of various elements. He may be said therefore to be the most simple being in existence. This attribute is sometimes called *aseity*.
- 6) Sovereignty: God rules over everything. He has absolute divine control of everything. This is a result of the other three primary incommunicable attributes.

The term *sovereignty* is an intrinsic absolute like *infinity* or *eternity*. It cannot be less than absolute without destroying the definition itself.

### Two impossibilities

- It is impossible for a finite creature to possess any of these attributes.
- It is impossible for God to possess any of the key incommunicable attributes without possessing the others.

## Evidentialism versus presuppositionalism in the attributes

The approach to deducing the attributes of God go back to the evidentialist-presuppositionalist debate.

The evidentialist claims that nature-based reason along with Scripture are adequate for deducing the incommunicable attributes. The presuppositionalist accepts Scripture as the only legitimate basis for learning about any of God's attributes.

## Communicable attributes (personal or moral) - pp.69-79

Sometimes these attributes are called *personal* or *moral* to emphasize them as description of character. They are called *communicable* because they can exist in common with finite creatures such as ourselves. The difference is that they are intrinsic to God but are acquired qualities in humans. Some of these are:

### Holiness

This attribute comes first because it is mentioned in Scripture more than all others put together.

The teacher may show the difference between Greek *hosios* and *hagios*. The former is an intrinsic non-acquired characteristic in God. The latter is acquired, as with us. This explains texts like Revelation 15:4, *For you alone are holy*.

### Love

Show here how liberal theology, along with popular thinking, consider love the principle attribute of God. This is false. Holiness is his principle personal attribute, although love is an important element. Unless holiness is first, then love turns into sentimentalism or even a tolerance for sin.

### Grace

Undeserved divine favor. This quality is central to God's holiness and character. He owes nothing to his creatures and therefore grace can be withheld or granted according to his will.

Other communicable attributes can be included such as righteousness, wisdom, patience, goodness, mercy, justice. These are logical extensions of the ones mentioned above.

## Indivisibility of attributes

Each attribute has a logical relationship to all the others, both communicable and incommunicable. Though inseparable and indivisible, yet God is still one simple being without parts.

In this sense, these divisions of attributes are artificial categories to help us understand God better.

### **Essence versus substance**

Jesus said *God is spirit*. (John 4:24) What is a spirit? Our finite natures and limited language provide no adequate description. We can only conceive of it as a non-corporeal entity. This merely describes what spirit is not, without defining exactly what it is. This, again, is analogical thought.

How do we describe what God is made of? Even the term “made of” is defective. Theologians have settled on the term *essence* to avoid the word *substance* because laymen often suppose we mean *material* substance and this provokes confusion.

### **Transcendence versus immanence**

The history of Christian theology follows an ebb and flow between these two concepts.<sup>4</sup> Different epochs of history emphasize one or the other.

The *transcendence* of God refers not only to his omnipresence and infinity but principally in what may be called his *quality of being*. He is so different from anything else that comparisons are virtually worthless. This means he is not a part of his creation in any sense of the word. He is independent of it, though he permeates it all. Nor is he dependent on anything he created.

Transcendence also means that all his attributes, personal and natural, are infinite, which makes him incomprehensible. He reveals himself by analogies such as *father*, *Lord*, *wind*, etc.

The *immanence* of God means he is present and active in every part of his creation, even though his quality of being transcends it.

In laymen’s terms, transcendence means he is way out there. Immanence means he is right here, also.

### **Incomprehensible**

In theological studies, we run across statements such as, God is incomprehensible or unknowable. The orthodox view simple means we cannot understand God except by analogies with finite beings or things.

For example, God is infinite. Our minds have difficulty wrapping around that concept. Therefore, he allows us to think of him as “up there” in heaven and lets us “lift up” our eyes in prayer. This is a concession to our finiteness.

Liberal theologians may try to use the term *incomprehensible* to hide their unbelief and imply that God cannot be known in a personal relationship. This is not Christianity at all.

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- Incommunicable attributes of God are deducible from creation.

- Incommunicable attributes are those he cannot have in common with finite creatures. These are sometimes called *natural attributes*.
- Communicable attributes are those God can share in common with his creatures, sometimes called *personal attributes*.
- God's transcendence means his quality of being is beyond anything created.
- Immanence means God is in everything he created without being a part of it.
- Incomprehensibility means God is understandable only by analogy because of our finiteness.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 62-64 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 3: Immutability – pp.62-64

**Purpose:** To define immutability and show it is necessary to understand God's covenant relationship with his people.

**Definition:** *Immutability* means unchangeable. God cannot change in his essence or character. This is a logical extension of his key incommunicable attributes. If he is almighty, all knowing and infinite, what is there to change? Immutability has its importance relative to God's covenant promises and our ability to trust him.

### **Texts supporting divine immutability**

[Psalm 33:11](#); [Isaiah 14:27](#); [46:10](#); [Matthew 24:35](#); [Hebrews 1:12](#); [6:17,18](#); [13:8](#); [James 1:17](#)

### **Arguments from Charnock on immutability<sup>5</sup>**

The name *Jehovah* includes this attribute. The term, apparently derived from the verb *to be*, implies self-existence.

- 1) If God were mutable, he would not be perfect. Any change would be for the better or for the worse.
- 2) Mutability is inconsistent with simplicity. If a change takes place in anything, such as a physical object, the change would take place in some part of it. But God has no parts.
- 3) If God is infinite he must be immutable. Any change implies limitations.
- 4) Mutability is contrary to the idea of God's independence.
- 5) The world could not be governed by anything other than something immutable. Otherwise, the principles on which nature is founded would have no stability.
- 6) Mutability is a property of a created being. If God were mutable, we would have to say he is a created being.

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- Immutability means *unchangeable*. It is an incommunicable attribute of God logically connected to other incommunicable attributes, in particular omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.72-74 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 4: Philosophical difficulties in communicable attributes – pp.72-74

**Purpose:** To clarify certain attributes of God that are frequently misunderstood such as the nature of his knowledge, love, holiness and justice.

### **Divine knowledge**

God knows himself. All reality is therefore a product of his self-knowledge. Since reality is a product of divine decrees, we can say that reality is a product of divine thoughts.

Therefore, since God is omniscient, his knowledge is innate, not acquired. God has never learned anything. He knows everything that could be knowable.

Further, everything he knows is front and center to his mind at all times. This is inherent in the definition of omniscience. In this sense, he has no memory. All references in Scripture to God responding to memory, such as remembering his covenant or not remembering sins, are anthropomorphic.

Curiously, because of God's omniscience, certain experiences common to finite creatures are impossible. He cannot be surprised, deceived, change his mind or lament previous decisions. Biblical descriptions of God experiencing such are anthropomorphic.

### **Foreknowledge – pp.73**

The basis of divine foreknowledge is his purposes. *Foreknowledge*, in reference to God, means his complete understanding of what he intends to do. It is not a mere prediction of what others are going to do. This is consistent with Scripture and is the Reformed view. [Acts 2:23](#); [4:27,28](#); [Romans 9:16](#); [Ephesians 1:11](#)

#### **Prophetic view**

This means God peers into the future to discover what is going to happen. This insinuates he is not in control of the development of events. It denies his sovereignty.

Those who hold this view do so to safeguard their understanding of the free will of man. They assume that divine control through sovereign decrees robs man of free will and makes him a puppet. This is sometimes called *openness theology*, meaning God is an observer of his creation and waits for people to make decisions to see how things will turn out.

Such thinking would destroy the doctrine of the sovereignty of God to spare the dignity of man and is unjustifiable. The apostles' prayer in [4:27,28](#), blends inseparably the sovereignty of God and the will of man.

#### **Probability theory**

This view claims God predicts the future by his knowledge of what people and circumstances are likely to do. This is a denial of divine decrees as well as his omniscience.

The logic fallacy is obvious. If the probabilities involved are less than 100%, there exists the possibility that God may be mistaken in his predictions. Do we know of any time in history when this has happened? If God's knowledge of the probabilities is 100%, then we are dealing with certainties and not probabilities.

### **God's goodness: Two viewpoints**

One view says the goodness of God means that whatever God does is good because he is absolute. An act is good for no other reason than because it is God who does it.

The other view is that goodness is an intrinsic mystical quality of his being and character. This view is amplified by Berkhof and other Reformed theologians or apologists like C.S. Lewis.

### **Love**

Three main viewpoints exist regarding the love of God for mankind.

**Universal and equivalent:** God loves every human being equally. This can be represented by a circle with everyone inside it. This is a popular view.

**Universal but not equivalent:** God has a benevolent attitude toward the human race in general but a special love for his elect in particular. God loves humanity as creator but his people as father. This may be represented by two interlocking circles.

**Distinctive:** God loves the elect and hates the reprobate. This can be represented by two separate circles. Calvin held this view; also the late Reformed theologian, John Gerstner.

Titus 3:5 tells us,

*But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,...*

The term *loving kindness* in Greek is *filanthropia* meaning "benevolence." This is a rare word not used exclusively for believers.

The Greek word for sacrificial love, *agape*, is never used in Scripture in reference to unbelievers. It is always associated with believers.

In Romans 9:13 we read, *Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated*. The thought that God may hate some people is repugnant to those who hold the first view, *universal and equivalent*. Attempts have been made to assuage the impact of this verse with the argument that the word *hate* may be comparative in the sense of a lesser kind of love. The appeal is to such statements as [Luke 14:26](#) in which Jesus requires a greater love for him than we have for our families.

However, the Romans 9 quote about Esau is taken from [Malachi 1:3](#) in which God announces he will annihilate Edom, the descendants of Esau, on the grounds he hated him.

With these considerations, the second view of love, *universal but not equivalent*, is popular among Reformed teachers.

## Holiness

This attribute is mentioned in Scripture as much as all others combined. Its importance cannot be overestimated. It is at the core of God's covenant relationships.

Holiness is intrinsic to God and communicable to us. We can imitate him in it. ([1Peter 1:15,16](#)) Nevertheless, it is a non-acquired attribute in God, central to his being. In this sense, the Scriptures tell us, *for you alone are holy, Revelation 15:4*. That is why Berkhof calls this attribute "majestic."

This attribute can be seen in two ways:

- Absolute perfection and harmony: internal and incommunicable.
- Relational: In relation to his created beings — external and communicable.

## Justice as punishment of sin - pp.280-287

**Corrective:** Liberals and universalists hold that divine punishments are corrective only. In this sense, God is merely interested in changing the conduct of fallen mankind.

This explains the liberal rejection of the doctrine of hell. For them, hell is unreasonable. They feel it would be improper to condemn people eternally because that would be malicious and vindictive.

This attitude results from a limited view of the importance of holiness and justice.

Some universalists, in order to fit their view into Scripture, claim that hell is a temporary abode for correction only.

The problem inherent in this has to do with expiation. If God's justice is merely corrective, then it follows that expiation on the cross was merely an example and did not actually remove the guilt of sin. Likewise with the word *propitiation* because it means "to appease wrath."

**Retributive:** God's justice is absolute, like his holiness. The demands of God's righteousness must be satisfied or God would not be holy. This is the view consistent with Scripture and logic for the following reasons:

- The Bible teaches that hell is an eternal punishment. This refutes the idea that justice is principally corrective.
- God, by his righteous judgment, destroyed entire nations. They are extinct. How is this merely corrective?

## From this lesson we learn...

- Reality is a product of divine decrees.

- Divine foreknowledge refers to his purposes, not a mere prediction of the future.
- Holiness is God's primary personal attribute.
- God's justice is either corrective or retributive.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 89-107 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 5: Trinity - pp.89-107

**Purpose:** Describe the traditional doctrine of the Trinity versus common heresies.

### **Biblical parallelism**

Two false extremes:

- Tri-theism: God is made up of three separate gods.
- Modalism (Sabellianism): God is one person but manifests himself as though he were three, depending on the circumstances.<sup>6</sup>

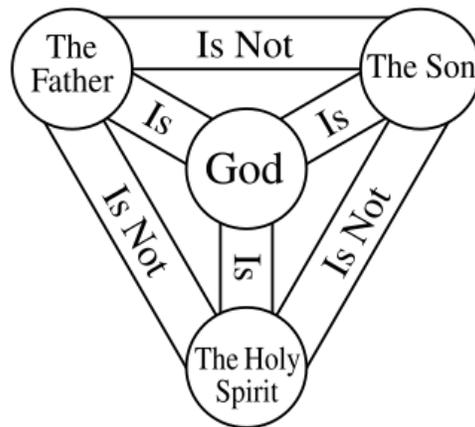
### **Historic orthodox view**

The Athanasian Creed, named after the fourth century bishop Athanasius,<sup>7</sup> was composed around the fifth century and has been adopted by Catholics and Protestants as the best expression of the biblical doctrine of the Trinity.

The doctrine of the Trinity balances two extremes. God is one in essence but three in persons. Each member of the Trinity is equal in power, dignity and authority. Yet each member is not a third of the whole.

This seems counterintuitive but is mathematically sound. Example:  $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$ . However many times the number one is multiplied by itself, the answer is always one. Therefore, the notion that three in one and one in three without each being a third of the whole does not violate logic.

The traditional “shield” of the Athanasian creed is below:



### **Ontological versus Economic Trinity**

How we think about the Trinity depends on whether we view the members in their relationship to one another or in relationship to us. The ontological perspective views the Trinity as the members relate to one another. The economic views them in their relationship to us.

Ontological deals with questions of essence, authority and attributes. The term comes from the Greek *ontos* = being. What are the members of the Trinity in their “being?” Are they the same essence? Do they have equal authority? Do they share the same attributes? Orthodox theology answers yes to these questions.

False cults can be identified quickly by their negative answer to any of the questions above. The Jehovah’s Witnesses, for example, claim Jesus is a created god. This is a denial of his eternal nature as well as equality of essence and authority with the Father.

Economic Trinity deals with the roles of each member in the salvation of the elect. The Father sends the Son who pays the price of redemption and the Holy Spirit applies it to the believer. These roles are different, though overlapping, so that by the nature of the case they require a ranking of authority.

Equal in authority: The Son and the Holy Spirit are subordinate in regard to their functions. This is a subordination of function (*Opera ad extra*), not a subordination of persons. [John 5:18, 19](#); [Philippians 2:6](#)

The Son is eternally engendered by the Father; begotten, not made. ([John 1:18](#); [Romans 1:3](#)) The continuous present participle is used in Greek in Romans 1:3, *genomenou*. This means he is not a created being and is not inferior to the Father.

Berkhof explains this as meaning the relationship between the first and second persons is like that between the sun and the light that the sun generates. Without the sun, light is not emitted. Yet without the emanation of light, the sun would not be the sun.

## The Filioque

This doctrine means the Holy Spirit is engendered by both the Father and the Son. The term comes from the Latin *filios* = son. This was added during the middle ages to the Nicene Creed and was a cause for the split between the western churches, under Rome, and the eastern churches, Greek and Russian Orthodox. The eastern churches hold that the Holy Spirit is engendered by the Father only.

The phrase “and of the son” first appeared in the sixth century but the schism took place in 1054 and is known in history as the [Great Schism](#).

The eastern churches claim this doctrine depreciates the personhood of the Holy Spirit and is close to blasphemous. The western churches point out this is not the intent because the Scriptures declare the following:

- The Holy Spirit is sent by both the Father and the Son, [John 15:26](#).
- He is called the Spirit of Christ in [Romans 8:9](#) and [1Peter 1:11](#).
- Redemption in Christ is applied by the Holy Spirit, [Hebrews 9:14](#).

The Reformed movement, western in origin, holds to the Filioque and is found in Reformed confessions. It is difficult to see, by the above considerations, how the Holy Spirit is denigrated in his person through being generated by both the Father and the

Son. The Son himself is generated by the Father yet is equal in authority and dignity with the Father. Evidently, being generated does not depreciate personhood.

### **Distinctions of properties and functions**

Properties and functions must differ between the persons of the Trinity, without which it would be difficult to describe them as distinct persons.

**The Father:** He engenders but is not engendered. The term “begotten” is used for this concept. He sends the Son and the Holy Spirit but is never sent by either of them. He calls the elect efficaciously although he uses the Holy Spirit for that. The Father is never the means of activity on the part of the other persons,

**The Son:** The redeemer who offers himself, [Hebrews 10:7](#).

**The Spirit:** Regenerates, [Titus 3:4](#); reproveth, [John 16:8](#); guides, [Romans 8:14](#).

**Defenses against anti-trinitarianism** (such as [Jesus Only](#); [Jehovah Witnesses](#), [Modalism](#)).

- 1) Baptism of Jesus, [Mark 1:10-11](#)— The three persons of the Trinity are active simultaneously yet described as localized. Although all three are infinite in essence, this localization proves the distinction of persons. The Father above speaks, Jesus is on the earth and the Holy Spirit is descending.
- 2) The distinctions of persons in [1John 2:22](#)— In the clause *the Father and the Son*, the word *and* translates *kai* with the article “the” attached. Grammatically, this makes a clear distinction of persons between the Father and the Son. Those who refuse this distinction are called *liars* and *antichrists*.
- 3) The baptismal formula: *Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. The Greek grammar comes to our aid again. The word “name” is in the singular (*onoma* not *onomata*) and means the following is one name, not three. Therefore, one being in three persons.
- 4) The different persons address each other by pronouns such and *you* and *I*. [Hebrews 1:8](#); [John 12:28](#)

### **Common errors**

**Anthropomorphism:** From the Greek *anthropos*= man; *morphos*= form. This view thinks of God as an enormous being in the form or a man. Such thinking is normal for children because their cognitive development lacks the ability to handle abstractions like infinity or eternity. Such is inexcusable for adult Christians, although it is amazing that many think in such terms.

**Tri-theism:** That God is made up of three gods. This error is held by Mormonism.

**Modalism:** The view that God is one person but manifests himself from time to time as different persons. Sometimes he manifests himself as Father, then another time as Son and then again perhaps as Holy Spirit. This heresy was invented by Sabellius around 250 A.D. in Egypt and is sometimes called Sabellianism.

**Jesus only:** That Jesus is God and there is no Father or Holy Spirit. This heresy is refuted by such texts as [1John 2:23,24](#).

**Unitarianism:** The view that God is one person and there is no Trinity. Jesus was not God incarnate according to this view but merely a man inspired by God. An entire denomination is called by this name.

**From this lesson we learn...**

- The historic orthodox view of the Trinity holds that the members are equal in essence but distinct in persons.
- The ontological Trinity refers to the relationship between the members.
- The economic Trinity refers to the manner in which each of the members relate to man in redemption.
- The Filioque is a doctrine claiming the Holy Spirit is generated by the Son also and not by the Father only.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.118-136 in preparation for the next class.

## [Lesson 6: Predestination](#) - pp.118-136

**Purpose:** To demonstrate that the doctrines of election and predestination are biblical and show the differences.

**Instructions:** Review the last lesson on divine decrees. Make sure the students understand that no event is free from the immutable decrees of God. Without this, the student will be unable to follow the logic of the arguments relative to predestination.

Review the texts relative to divine foreknowledge. Mention that God's knowledge of his people means to "care for them" or "have a personal relationship with them." Foreknowledge does not mean God simply knows in advance those who would respond to him. Use texts such as [Amos 3:2](#); [Hosea 13:5](#); [1Corinthians 8:3](#); [Galatians 4:9](#); [2Timothy 2:19](#).

### **Predestination: Two parts**

This doctrine contains two elements: Election and reprobation.

**Election:** Review Romans 9 and [Ephesians 1:11](#). Election is the decree of God to save specific individuals.

**Reprobation:** The decree of God to pass by those not elect and leave them in the corruption they themselves have chosen. [Deuteronomy 2:30](#); [Proverbs.16:4](#); [Isaiah.63:17](#); [Matthew 11:25](#); [3:11](#); [John 10:26](#); [12:40](#); [17:9](#); [1Peter 2:8](#); [2Peter.2:12](#)

**Preterition:** The view that God is active in reprobation and not merely ignoring people. This is the view held by Calvin.

The difference between reprobation and preterition can be illustrated by hardball and softball. "Hardball" means God arranges circumstances to allow people to harden their hearts and thus justify his decree of condemnation. For example, he may allow a non-elect to hear the gospel, knowing that person will reject it and further harden his own heart. This is not injustice on God's part.

"Softball" means he ignores the non-elect and lets them have their own way. That is *reprobation* as affirmed by Presbyterians and other Reformed groups. See Chapter 3, Art.7 of [WCF](#).

### **Texts used by Arminians to refute election**

#### **Argument "in Christ" from [Ephesians 1:4](#)**

Christ is the supreme elect. Therefore, God chooses to elect those whom he foreknows will be in Christ by their own choice.

**Refutation:** The phrase “in Christ” must mean “chosen to be in Christ,” not “chosen because they are in Christ.” The text shows we were chosen *to be holy*, not because God foresaw we would be holy. Scripture consistently teaches we cannot be holy unless we are in Christ. The argument is circular reasoning.

#### **Argument from sanctification**

This argument from [2Thessalonians 2:13](#) says that divine election is *through sanctification* in the sense that God chooses those he foresees will be sanctified.

**Refutation:** The phrase *through sanctification* is not equivalent to “because of sanctification.” (Greek: *δια αγιασμου*, not *δια αγιασμον*) The word *sanctification* means “separate.” The grammar indicates that God separates for his own use those whom he elects.

#### **Argument from foreknowledge**

2Peter 1:2

*...elect... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:*

It is assumed that God elects people by looking into the future and noting those who will be obedient to Jesus.

**Refutation:** The clause *for obedience* is not equal to *because of obedience*. The obedience is the result of election and not the cause. The text simply means that God knows all about how he is going to sanctify his chosen ones and make them obedient to Jesus Christ by sprinkling them with his blood.

From Romans 8:30, *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined...*

The assumption is that God looking into the future and saw saving faith in some and chose those accordingly.

**Refutation:** The verse says God *foreknew* people but says nothing about what he foreknew about them. No mention in the text is found about faith as the factor foreknown. It is their *person* he foreknew, not any virtues in them. The unsaved have no virtues to foresee that would merit salvation. The text means he knows those whom he has chosen and therefore arranges circumstances to ensure they will come to him. This providential activity is the root meaning of predestination. Refer again to the verses above on the meaning of [foreknew](#).

This reflects back to [Romans 8:28](#), showing how God works everything for those *called according to his purpose*.

Moreover, saving faith is given to the elect only according to [John 6:44,65](#); [Acts 13:48](#); [Titus 1:1](#); [1Timothy 1:14](#).

## Warning

Regardless of how we present predestination, some will be offended. They imagine we are saying that God is a tyrant who chooses “arbitrarily” and takes pleasure in sending people to hell.

In most conversations with Arminians, they frequently use the word “arbitrary” to describe the Reformed view. Yet at the [Synod of Dort](#) in 1618, when Arminianism was refuted, the delegates made it clear that using the word “arbitrary” to describe the Reformed doctrine of election is slander.

Scripture connects the term *purpose* with election. ([Romans 9:11](#); [Ephesians 1:11](#)) This shows God does nothing arbitrarily. We may not know what is the purpose but this does not make it arbitrary.

### Care in presenting this doctrine

Try to present election and predestination in a positive form: Our security of salvation is rooted more deeply than in our act of “accepting Christ.” It is grounded in God’s sovereign decrees in eternity.

Therefore, the basis of our salvation transcends the present circumstances of our lives and all the problems and sins involved.

### From this lesson we learn...

- Predestination is the view that God has predetermined the final fate of every human being and may be viewed in two ways: Election and reprobation.
- Election is God’s decree to save certain individuals.
- Reprobation is the decree of God to pass by the non elect and leave them in the sinful condition they have chosen.
- The Arminian argument on the grounds of foreknowledge is inadequate to disprove election.

**Homework reading:** Handout, Smalling's essay, [Foreknowledge: Does it explain election?](#); Smalling's essay on [2Peter 3:9](#); Berkhof pp.106-117 in preparation for the next class;

## [Lesson 7: Decrees – pp.106-117](#)

**Purposes:** Describe what is meant by divine decrees and their characteristics.

### **Characteristics of divine decrees**

**Immutable:** God's decrees are unchangeable.

**Eternal:** God's decrees were made in eternity and nothing in our time dimension can affect their outcome.

**Inevitable:** God's decrees cannot fail.

**Non-contingent:** God's eternal decrees are independent of any factor including foreseen human cooperation.

Key texts: [Psalm 33:11](#); [Proverbs19:21](#); [Job 23:13](#); [Isaiah 46:10](#); [Daniel 4:35](#); [Matthew 10:29](#); [Ephesians 1:11](#)

### **Emphasis on non-contingency**

The teacher should explain that Arminians believe in contingent decrees, according to God's foreknowledge of how man might respond. Show why that doctrine denies the sovereignty of God. [Matthew 21:42](#); [Acts 4:27, 28](#)

### **Refutations of the Arminian concept of foreknowledge**

If divine foreknowledge was based on events within time, we would have to say that God is limited to time. This insinuates God is not the author of time and its events. That would be like saying God is looking at a film and cutting out what he does not want. This does not explain who made the film.

Contingent decrees deny divine transcendence and makes God dependent on his creation. That is paganism, not Christianity.

It is impossible to have absolute foreknowledge of undetermined events. If the will of man is "free" in the Arminian sense of non-determination, then it is impossible to have foreknowledge of what a person will decide. Therefore the Arminian concept of free will contradicts election by their own view of foreknowledge.

Among all the possible worlds God could have created, he decided to create this one and no other. Therefore, his foreknowledge is inseparable from his sovereign will and decrees. Arminianism, on the other hand, tends to separate God's knowledge from his will. Therefore, it is contradictory to base his decrees on his foreknowledge.

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- The divine decrees are immutable, eternal, inevitable and not contingent on man's will.

- The Arminian view of divine decrees based on God's foreknowledge is contrary to Scripture and self-contradictory.

**Homework reading:** Smalling's article, [Distinctions in the will of God](#)

## Lesson 8: Wesleyan Arminianism

**Purpose:** Expose Arminianism as the main Protestant rival to Reformed theology,.

### **Distinctives of Wesleyan Arminianism**

Arminianism is a system of Protestant theology developed in the late reformation period by a Dutch pastor, Jacob Arminius, d.1609. It opposes the theology of the reformation with five points called “remonstrances” (rebukes) against the Reformed faith.

Arminianism was refuted in Holland during fifteen months of debates at the Synod of Dort in 1618 and declared unscriptural. The five points of Calvinism were composed at that time by the Reformed theologians who defeated the Arminians in debate.

This resulted in the Canons of Dort, the standard of faith of the Christian Reformed Church and was used in the development of the Westminster Confession in 1648, held by Presbyterians.

Arminianism should have died out for good at that time but was revived by the English evangelist John Wesley, founder of Methodism.

### **Arminian distinctives (remonstrances)**

**Common grace:** Those mercies in common with all people such as material provision and preservation of the human race along with the possibility of salvation for all.

**Universal atonement:** Christ died with the intention of providing an “opportunity” for all to be saved, depending on how they use their free will.

**Universal justification:** Everyone is automatically justified from the guilt of the sin of Adam and are no longer responsible for that. They are responsible only for their own personal sins.

**Restoration of free will to all:** Free will has been restored to everyone, enabling them to choose salvation at any moment.

**Prevenient grace:** (Previous to salvation.) A special persuasion from the Holy Spirit enabling a person to make an initial move toward God. Through this, God regenerates him if he responds properly.

### **Arminians insist that...**

- 1) Though man is enslaved to sin, it is not to the point of being unable to choose salvation by his free will.
- 2) Unless man’s will is free to choose otherwise, he would not be responsible. This is known as the doctrine of contrary choice. This is a logic error. There is no necessary connection between freedom and ability.

- 3) All men have an opportunity to be saved. Therefore Christ died for all.

Arminian attempts to resolve the so-called dilemmas relative to man's moral state are unscriptural and irrational, as Berkhof has pointed out. See Smalling's essay on [logic fallacies](#) regarding free will.

### Summary of the Arminian viewpoint

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross provided a *common grace* for all. This includes the restoration of free will and forgiveness of the sin of Adam. A "prevenient" grace was also provided in the cross, which means a special ability to be drawn to Christ, although not necessarily effectually. Therefore, everyone gets an opportunity to be saved, depending on whether they choose to *improve* on the initial grace they have received through their free will.

### Key texts used by Arminians

- 1) On universal justification: [Romans 5:18](#)
- 2) On universal atonement: [2 Corinthians 5:14](#) See Smalling's [handouts](#) on these two verses.
- 3) Commands and exhortations to repent: Arminians suppose these texts prove the ability to repent and obey. This supposition has been refuted by Calvinists. According to [Romans 3:19](#), God uses commands and exhortations to prove man's inherent stubbornness and rebellion, not freedom of will. The other thing proven by these commands are God's willingness to receive repentant sinners.

### Arminianism argue that...

- 4) Commands to obey imply an inherent ability to do so.
  - a) Answer: Commands prove God's holiness, not man's ability. If the Arminian supposition was valid, we would not need Jesus.
- 5) The will is not free unless it is morally neutral or undetermined.
  - a) Answer: Defining free will in terms of moral neutrality is never suggested in Scripture.
- 6) God provides sinners a prevenient grace, enough of a free will to allow the person to choose or reject Christ.
  - a) Answer: The Bible never teaches a prevenient grace. This was invented by Wesley.
- 7) God has freed the will of man through the sacrifice of Christ to give everyone an opportunity to be saved. They reason that God would not condemn people without an opportunity to be saved.
  - a) Answer: God's existence and attributes have been revealed to everyone through creation and conscience. Nothing prevents repentance. The logical conclusion regarding the need for repentance is inescapable and therefore man suppresses it. (Romans 1:18-20; 2:14) Everyone has already had an opportunity to repent, even without the gospel.

- b) The notion of opportunity presupposes that salvation is based on a human ability to take advantage of opportunities presented. This is not taught in the Bible. [John 6:44,65](#); [Romans 8:30](#)
- 8) God would never leave his fallen creatures in such a state, with no opportunity for salvation.
- a) Answer: This is exactly what he did with fallen angels. A complete race of beings were left in a fallen state with no provision for salvation. This is taught in [Hebrews 2:16](#).
- 9) The sacrifice of Christ justifies sinners from the guilt of Adam's sin but not from personal guilt.
- a) Answer: The Bible never associates justification with unbelievers.
- 10) God's decree of salvation depends on his foreknowledge of man's response.
- a) Answer: Making God's decrees dependent on the mutable will of man contradicts Scripture.
- 11) God's common grace makes saving grace available to all.
- a) Answer: Common grace in Scripture allows nothing more than accountability for the revelation of God's existence and attributes. Saving grace is always associate with the elect only.

**From this lesson we learn...**

- Arminianism is the main Protestant rival to Reformed theology.
- Arminians believe the sacrifice of Christ purchased free will for all people and the opportunity to be saved.
- The various distinctives of Arminian theology are based on logic fallacies.

**Homework reading:** Smalling's handouts on [Romans 5:18](#) and [2Corinthians 5:14](#); Berkhof pp. 477-494 for the next class.

## Lesson 9: Atonement and Common Grace - pp.477-494

**Purpose:** Some movements, in particular Arminianism, affirm that the death of Christ purchased a common grace to make salvation an opportunity for everyone. This has led to other errors such as the social gospel, restoration of creation, restoring free will for all men. This lesson refutes the error.

### **Scripture shows no connection between the sacrifice of Christ and the provision of common grace for all mankind**

An examination of the texts proposed for this view, show the following defects in interpretation:

- 1) Texts on common grace are never found in any context relative to atonement.
- 2) Certain verses, taken out of context, could be used to support a doctrine of universal salvation rather than merely common grace. This would prove far more than the Arminian wishes. Two such verses will be examined below.
- 3) Some texts cited by Arminians consist in exhortations and commands to repent which have nothing to do with grace, special nor common. They reveal what man ought to do but say nothing about one's abilities to obey.

### **It is unnecessary that the sacrifice of Christ be involved for common grace to exist**

- 4) The atonement was for the expiation of sin and the appeasement of the wrath of God. ([Romans 3:24,25](#))
- 5) God's benevolence toward mankind in general is adequate grounds for common grace apart from the atonement. This is clear from [Acts 14:16,17](#); [1Timothy 4:10](#)
- 6) It does not follow logically that common grace implies a divine obligation to provide special grace.
- 7) Even if a clear connection could be shown between the atonement and the provision of common grace, the burden of proof would remain to show why this would restore free will to humanity in general.
- 8) It is unnecessary to assume that unless common grace is provided for in the cross that mankind has no "opportunity" to repent. The divine law written in the conscience is an opportunity if they wanted to obey it. ([Romans 2:14-15](#)) The light of nature in creation is clear if they would stop suppressing the message it conveys.

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- No scriptural connection exists between the sacrifice of Christ and the provision of common grace for all mankind.

- God's benevolence toward the human race in general is adequate grounds for common grace. The atonement was unnecessary to provide it.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.137-152 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 10: Doctrine of creation - pp. 137-152

**Purpose:** Show the various views of creation and God's relationship to it.

### **The concept of *ex nihilo*: Out of nothing**

Two different views of *ex nihilo*: what is meant by God creating something out of nothing

**The term *nothing* means that God did not create the universe out of anything from himself**

The intent of this view is to avoid pantheism; the belief that everything is God or a part of God's essence.

A logic problem exists in this interpretation of *ex nihilo*. The term *nothing* is treated as a *something* from which God could derive the creation. But *nothing* is an absolute and cannot be conceived as a *something*.

***Nothing* means "no previously existing material"**

The problem with this view is that if God did not produce the universe out of something previously existing, the only thing out of which he could produce it is himself. This again points to pantheism because it suggests that the creation is a part of God. This implies a denial of God's transcendence.

Certain texts appear to lean toward the concept that God did indeed produce creation out of himself. The element used is his power. [Romans 1:20](#); [Jeremiah 10:12](#); [27:5](#); [32:17](#)

The [LXX](#), [Jeremiah 10:12](#), literally says *ex dynamis autou*, which means "out of his power," with the word *ex* inferring the source of the action was God's energy. If this is the case, then it follows that everything that exists is really God's power in physical, visible form.

This encroaches on the biblical doctrine of God's transcendence: he is not a part of his creation. How this can be reconciled is a mystery.

An interesting scientific sidelight is Einstein's famous formula,  $E=mc^2$  which means matter is energy moving slower than the speed of light.

How God creates things out of himself while being transcendent with respect to his creation, is unclear.

### **God's purposes in creation**

**Self revelation: Romans 9:22-24**

According to Romans 9, God's purpose in creation is to reveal aspects of his nature, in particular justice and mercy. A reference in Ephesians 3:9,10 suggests God has a wider audience than mankind to which he is revealing himself. Data regarding God's purpose in creation beyond this is lacking.

### Benefit of the elect

The biblical concept of providence is inseparable from the covenant relationship between God and his people. This will become clearer in the next section on the covenant. [Mark 13:20](#); [2Tim.2:10](#); [1Cor.3:21-23](#)

### Did God need creation?

Arminianism: God had a need for communion with other beings. God was lonely.

#### Refutations

- 1) It contradicts the divine perfection. If God is perfect, then by definition, he could have no needs. If God acted on the basis of a necessity, that would contradict the whole concept of perfection.
- 2) It contradicts the doctrine of the Trinity. What is lacking in the communion between the three members of the Trinity that would produce loneliness in them?
- 3) It contradicts Paul's declaration to the Athenians that God has no needs outside of himself for his wellbeing. [Acts 17:25](#)

Some say that God had a "need to create" because otherwise he would not have done it. This, however, might involve a defective definition of "need."

Aquinas seemed to lean toward this view and suggested that creativity is such an intrinsic part of God's being that he cannot NOT create and has been doing so forever. Aquinas made it clear however, that he was speculating and not affirming this as a doctrine.<sup>8</sup>

### Theistic evolution

This view holds that development of life on earth happened by the principles of evolution God created.

#### Is it heresy?

If the term *heresy* is defined as a contradiction of an essential Christian doctrine such as those found in the [ecumenical creeds](#), then the answer is no. Whether it is good science or good theology is another question.

Some protestant denominations, as well as Roman Catholic, assert that theistic evolution is compatible with basic Christian doctrine. They suggest this may be the way God went about that aspect of his creation.

Others assert that evolution is a tacit denial of God's activity in creation and insist that if Christianity is true, evolution is false and therefore argue against evolution. They often quote the Genesis phrase *after its kind*, as support and suggest this refers to genetic barriers that cannot be crossed.

Theistic evolutionists respond that evolutionists have never said life does not reproduce after its own kind; only that they do not reproduce *exactly*, and therefore leave room for

natural selection over time. Further, they say, the Genesis account should be taken metaphorically and not as an attempt at scientific accuracy.

The debate continues.

## **Young earth versus old earth creationism**

It is a fact of church history that no international council was ever held to establish what is the orthodox view of creation. Pre-Christian Jews expressed in the [Talmud](#) that a literal interpretation of the days of creation is unnecessary. The issue is therefore a matter of personal interpretation and conscience. From a pastoral perspective, this may need to be emphasized.

### **Young earth**

The theorists of young earth creationism assert that God added time into the creation to give the impression it is very old. The dinosaurs, for example, did not really exist. God put the fossils there as though the earth had gone through vast periods of time.

This view is called *prochronism* [Greek: Before time] and was propounded in 1857 by Philip Gosse, an English naturalist in his book **OMPHALOS**.<sup>9</sup> The book was rejected by both the scientific and theological communities on the grounds it is not falsifiable. No experiment can disprove it if it is false.

If God put time into everything to make it look old, how could that be known? It would be a different matter if God had told us plainly he did that. However, we find no such statement in Scripture.

Prochronism makes God appear to be a deceiver: arranging the creation to trick us into thinking it is young when it is old. This becomes an issue of character, not of divine ability. The age of the earth has never been settled by the church universal as a point of orthodoxy.

### **Old earth**

Many conservative theologians accept old earth creationism. These include Augustine, Hodge and many others. Those who hold this view tend to reject a dichotomy between science and Scripture.

The debate continues.

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- All branches of Christendom hold that God created the universe out of nothing.
- Philosophical difficulties exist as to what is meant by the term *nothing*.
- God is not dependent on anything he created.
- Controversy exists within Christian circles as to whether or not theistic evolution is heresy.
- Views about creation can be divided into young earth versus old earth creationism.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.180-195 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 11: Providence - pp.180-195

**Purpose:** Define providence and why it is important to understand.

**Definition:** God's activity by which he preserves and governs all aspects of his creation.

### **Providence versus decrees**

*Divine decrees* refers to God's decision to act in a certain way. *Providence* means the arrangement of the circumstances to ensure the accomplishment of his decrees.

*Providence* does not mean God created the natural order and then withdrew from it and is no longer active in its development. That is called *deism*.

### **Concurrence versus deism**

*Concurrence* means God is present and active in everything, though not in the sense of manipulation like a puppet-master.

Deism can take two forms: hard and soft. The hard deist suggests that God created natural law to work without knowing how it would develop and has no real interest in the outcome. We humans are like ants in a colony and God has no more concern for us than we do for ants.

This form of deism is popular with people who see the logical necessity for belief in a creator but do not want God involved with their lives.

The soft view holds that God created everything to develop in a particular way. Whether he has a personal interest in anybody is possible, but unknowable with certainty.

### **Christ and providence**

According to Scripture, God the Father gave authority over all creation to God the Son. An understanding of providence is therefore inseparable from our understanding of the relationship between the first and second member of the Trinity. This is clear from: [Matthew 28:18](#); [John 17:2](#); [Romans 14:9](#); [1Corinthians 8:6](#); [Ephesians 1:21](#); [Colossians 1:18](#); [1Peter 3:22](#)

### **Benefit of the elect**

The biblical concept of providence is inseparable from the covenant relationship between God and his people. This will become clearer in the next section on the covenant. [Mark 13:20](#); [2Tim.2:10](#); [1Cor.3:21-23](#)

### **The means of providence**

Though God can do miracles, his ordinary way of working is through people or circumstances. This is *providence*. ([WCF Chapter 5-3](#)) Even with miracles, he often uses things or people. God used an east wind to open the Red Sea. He could have done it directly by his power but he used a "means."

### **Arminian and Reformed perspectives of providence**

**Arminian:** Most things happen by chance, without God's intervention. But he may intervene to benefit his people through fortuitous circumstances.

This concept is more of an attitude than a defined theological position. Some even say, "God can do nothing unless someone prays."<sup>10</sup> Though they recognize secondary causes, this view suggests that God is subject to causation.

**Reformed:** God is actively involved in everything at all times. This is concurrence.

- 1) He is the preserver of the human race: [1 Timothy 4:10](#); [Acts 14:17](#)
- 2) His common grace provides good things for all mankind. [James 1:17](#)
- 3) The continuation of our existence depends on him. [Acts 17:26,27](#)
- 4) He works according to his will, not according to contingencies. [Ephesians 1:11](#)

The Reformed view does not deny secondary causes (influence of things and people). The actions of people cause events. It is unclear how God's will and man's causative actions concur. Berkhof emphasizes this because he feels that otherwise we would be declaring the autonomy of man.

### **Common man's viewpoint**

Miracles, according to the thinking of most who not trained in theology, are violations of natural law. This concept is shallow. God does not violate natural law but simply applies his own power above it. An example is aerodynamics overcoming the law of gravity. In this sense, gravity is not "violated," simply overpowered.

Contrary to what skeptics suppose, Christians do not deny the uniformity of natural law. They simply deny that natural law is the only law that exists. Christians affirm there exists a spiritual dimension and therefore arguments appealing to natural law are irrelevant.

**Berkhof:** God's will is normally manifest through natural processes. Nevertheless, he is not subject to processes because he created them. As the author of the processes, he is able to suspend them at will. These are known as miracles.

**C.S. Lewis:** God never suspends a natural law. He applies a natural law superior to what is familiar to us.

Lewis held to this because he found it disagreeable that God would undo what he created. He also said the miracles of the Bible are an acceleration of events God does normally in natural processes.<sup>11</sup> In this he supports the idea of concurrence.

For example, Jesus transforms water into wine every year by natural processes involved with the vine. The miracle at Cana was the same thing without using natural process. In the case of the resurrection, God simply put in reverse the natural processes of decomposition. He played the film backwards, so to speak.

Lewis went on to say that the biblical miracles have as their purpose the glory of God. If they seem to serve some other purpose, they are not of God.

## **Jesuits and the doctrine of pious fraud**

This doctrine affirms it is valid to falsify miracles if it produces faith. This may explain some of the supposed miracles during the middle ages or the supposed appearances of the Virgin.

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- Two views of creation *ex nihilo* exist.
- Old earth versus young earth is a continuing debate among Christians.
- God is present and active in his creation. This is called *providence* in contrast to deism which teaches God is not involved in his creation.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.207-212 in preparation for the next class.

## PART TWO: ANTHROPOLOGY

### Doctrine of Man Origin, nature, sin and covenants

#### [Lesson 12](#): The soul; nature of man - pp.207-212

**Purpose:** Explain the origin of the soul, the two main views of how a human being is composed and what is meant by *image of God*.

#### **Origin of the soul: Traducianism versus creationism**

This deals with how God communicates the sin of Adam to the soul.

**Traducianism:** The view that the soul is transmitted by natural generation just as is the body. This is the Reformed perspective and is reflected in the WCF [Chapter VI, Article 3](#).

This explains how the guilt of Adam is transmitted to his descendants without involving God. A weakness in this view is that the soul is non-material. It is difficult to see how it can be transmitted genetically.

**Creationism:** The concept that the soul is created by God and implanted in the fetus. This seems to agree with the logic in Romans 5 on the parallelism between Adam and Christ.

It is also consistent with the doctrine of concurrence: God is active in his creation. A serious weakness, however, is that it puts God in the position of creating a corrupted soul.

#### **The composition of man: Trichotomism versus dichotomism**

Two views as to the composition of human nature:

**Trichotomism:** The view that man consists of three distinct parts: body, soul and spirit.

Disagreement exists as to whether the soul is connected more to the material essence of man than to the spiritual.

Some believe the soul is the part of man that communicates with himself or people, while the spirit is the part that communicates with God. The Bible does not support this concept because the two terms are frequently used interchangeably.

Among Arminians in general, especially Pentecostals and Charismatics, trichotomism is popular because it concords with certain of their doctrines.

**Dichotomism:** Man consists of two parts only, the material and the spiritual.

This view is found more within the Reformed branch of theology and is the dominant view throughout most of church history. Dichotomism affirms that soul and spirit are synonyms with no distinction in essence. The difference is in who the inner man is relating to. If the relationship is toward God, the term *spirit* tends to be used. If in relation to other people, the term *soul* tends to be more prominent.

Dichotomists suggest that trichotomism results more from the influence of Greek philosophy than sound exegesis.

Ask the students to repeat these arguments by Berkhof on this theme:

1. The creation narration in Genesis shows no such distinctions.
2. The words “soul” and “spirit” are used interchangeably in Scripture.
3. God himself, who is a spirit, is also said to have a soul.
4. The word “spirit” is even used with regard to animal life.

The evidences for the two views are almost equal. Each side has strong points and at least one serious defect.

#### **Trichotomism: Strength and weakness**

Two Bible texts are used to support this view: [1Thessalonians 5:23](#) and [Hebrews 4:12](#). Dichotomists respond that the use of the terms *soul* and *spirit* in the same verse does not prove a difference of essence. They ask: Shall we consider the soul to be as different from the spirit as the spirit is from the body? The string of nouns are there for emphasis, not to support a distinction of essence.

As for the Hebrews verse, the dichotomist says the text does not support a distinction between soul and spirit, anymore than it does between thoughts and intentions. The use of the two sets of terms in the verse is for literary artistic balance and not for doctrinal precision.

#### **Dichotomism: Strength and weakness**

The frequent interchangeable use in Scripture of soul and spirit supports this view. God himself who is a spirit, is said to have a soul, [Isaiah 42:1](#). Death of the body cannot cause the death of the soul, [Matthew 6:25](#). Therefore, the soul is the immaterial part of man. This implies the terms *soul* and *spirit* are synonymous.

Paul seems to lean toward a dichotomous view by his frequent parallelisms. A couple of examples are: [Romans 8:10](#); [2 Corinthians 7:1](#)

#### **From this we learn...**

- Two views exist as to the manner in which the sin of Adam is imputed to man:
  - Traducianism: The sin of Adam is transmitted by natural procreation.
  - Creationism: God creates the soul with adamic corruption in it and places it in the person.

- The composition of a human being from a theological perspective can be divided into two camps:
  - Trichotomism: The view that man is composed of three parts; body, soul and spirit.
  - Dichotomism: The view that man is composed of two parts, inner man (spirit or soul are synonyms) and the outer man (body).

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.219-229 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 13: Man as the image of God – pp.219-229

**Purpose:** Show what is meant by the image of God in man.

### **In what sense is man the image of God and angels are not?**

This question underscores the ambiguity in the *imago dei*, “image of God.” Scripture states clearly that man is the image but does not define it plainly.

It has been argued that the image reflects certain attributes in common with God: moral faculty, intelligence, self-awareness and free will. Angels, however, have these attributes and are not the image of God.

The difference may have to do with God’s appointment of man to have dominion over creation. This is suggested in [Hebrews 2:5-8](#). If this is the case, the image of God in man has nothing to do with a comparison of attributes such as reason or moral sense. It would simply be a matter of status as God’s regent over creation. [Genesis 1:26,27](#)

### **Lost image?**

Some have claimed the image of God was lost at the fall of Adam. This view is refuted by such texts as [James 3:9](#); [1Corinthians 11:7](#). The image was disfigured and soiled but not destroyed.

### **Male and female in the image of God**

Are both genders equally the image of God? The answer is yes. This is supported by [Genesis 5:1,2](#).

Although both are God’s image, the woman derived that image through man, whereas man was created directly by God.

This means she is secondary in authority of rank in that relationship but not with respect to intrinsic value. Though both are the glory of God, when it comes to the relation of man to woman, the divine order in the home and church is clear. [1 Corinthians 11:7,8](#)

All apostolic references to the relationship of man to woman in the home or the church, refer back to their created purpose in Genesis without reference to future cultural norms. The woman’s role is service, not dominion. This is clear from Scriptures such as 1Timothy 2:8-15 and 1Corinthians 11.

Paul indicates that the woman may not exercise authority over men in the church. ([1Timothy 2:12](#)) It is questionable if he means this to apply to society at large in the domain of politics or business. Paul limits his teaching to ecclesiastical and familial authority.

In [1Timothy 2:14](#) Paul insinuates the woman could be susceptible to religious deception and uses the fall to illustrate this.

Adam is the progenitor and initiator, as is God the Father. This may be why men are to represent God to the people within ecclesiastical offices.

## Different viewpoints on the image of God

**Roman Catholic:** The image of God consists in original righteousness along with reason and moral free will. Only original righteousness was lost in the fall. Therefore, the image of God in man is partially lost.

**Arminian:** The image of God consists in reason, moral sensibility and particularly free will. Therefore, the image of God was truly lost but was restored to all mankind by the universal atonement of Christ. (See lesson on [Wesleyan Arminianism](#).)

**Reformed:** The image of God consists in reason, moral sensibility, will and ruling authority. None of these were lost, only became enslaved to sin. All faculties continue functioning. Therefore, the image of God was not lost. Man, according to Scripture, is still the image of God, however lost he may be. This is supported by [James 3:9](#) which uses the present tense to describe humanity in its current state.

### From this we learn...

- Man is the image of God (*imago dei*). The precise definition of the term remains a matter of debate, although the Reformed branch tends to view it as man's dominion over creation as co-regent with God.
- Men and women are equally the image of God although man was created first and therefore has authority in his relationship with the woman in marriage and the church.
- Views vary on the fall's effect on the image of God: Totally lost, partially lost or simply soiled.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.247-259 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 14: Sin, evil and darkness – pp.247-259

**Purpose:** Define sin according to Scripture; discuss and refute errors.

### **Biblical definition of sin**

Transgression of the law of God. [1John 3:4](#) All moralistic terms have the moral law as their only frame of reference.

Sin has no existence apart from the law of God, whether written in Scripture or the conscience. ([Romans 5:13](#)) No one has the right to invent laws inconsistent with the law of God. See [WCF Chapter 16, Art.1](#)

Sin is also a state of being, not merely an act.

1. *Hamartia*: Sin as a specific act. Found only in [Mark 3:29](#), [Romans 3:25](#)
2. [1Corinthians 6:18](#) *Hamartema*: Also a specific act but with emphasis on the resulting spiritual state. The Bible tends to perceive sin more as a state of being than a mere act.<sup>12</sup>

The unregenerate are viewed in Scripture as living in a domain of darkness. This is far different from viewing them as merely committing an occasional sinful act. [John 3:19](#); [5:24](#); [1John 2:11](#); [Acts 26:18](#)

### **Erroneous definitions**

Modern philosophical systems discuss the problem of sin but all commit the same error. They assume evil is real but never define it in relation to an objective universal standard. They define the nature of sin in different ways but all reasoning starts by presupposing the existence of evil. A Christian understands that the divine standards are planted so deeply in the human conscience that such philosophers cannot escape their reality as [Romans 2:14](#) indicates.

However, the existence of a universal evil suggests the existence of a giver of universal moral laws. Ironically, therefore, evil confirms the existence of God. Absolute evil cannot exist without an absolute good.

Nevertheless, these philosophers suppress this knowledge and prefer to deal with the question of evil apart from the question of God's existence and his will. This persistent suppression of the obvious is a basis of their condemnation. [Romans 1:18-26](#)

It is self-contradictory to discuss evil as a reality without dealing with the absolute standard by which it is defined. This is a clear example of the depravity of man and the self-deception of relativistic philosophers.

View of philosophers who commit such errors:

**Deprivation view, Leibnitz:** Sin is simply being deprived of something good and useful. Refutation: Leibnitz fails to provide an absolute standard to define what is the good from which one is deprived.

**Illusion view, Spinoza:** Evil is an illusion. Refutation: An illusion relative to what standard? An illusion of what?

**Consciousness view, Schleiermacher:** A lack of consciousness of God and a product of the sensual nature of man. Refutation: By what standard does he say that the sensual nature of man is necessarily evil unless he has presupposed an objective and universal standard?

## Religious errors

**Selfishness view, Strong:** Evil is selfishness. (Note: Strong was a Baptist and normally conservative. He ceded to modern influences on this point.) Refutation: Where is the standard by which he concluded that selfishness is evil?

**Free will view, Arminianism:** An act contrary to God's law but not necessarily a state of being. No evil can exist without free will and the possibility of choosing the contrary. Refutation: The Bible consistently views living in sin as dwelling in a domain of darkness. This is especially clear in the Gospel of John in such texts as [3:19](#); [12:46](#).

## The unpardonable sin

[Matthew 12:32](#); [Mark 3:29](#); [Luke 12:10](#)

Is this defined as rejecting Christ until death? This view is held by some and is an error:

- 1) None of the texts say that.
- 2) It is illogical. This would mean it is pardonable until the point of death. But that does not make any distinction between that sin and any others committed by an unregenerate person.

The texts, in their literal sense say speaking evil of the Holy Spirit is the unpardonable sin. Berkhof's comments on this seem plausible but not authoritative, p.277.

If [1John 5:16](#) refers to this sin, then we are prohibited from praying for those who commit it.

## Venial or mortal?

No biblical distinction exists regarding the eternal consequences of any sin.

[Romans 6:23](#)

The Old Testament refers to different punishments for sins. Likewise, nations were destroyed for some practices and not for others. We must not confuse degree of culpability with the degree of eternal consequences. A little poison may kill just as dead as much. Nevertheless, some sins are worse than others.

The Roman Catholic and Arminian distinction between sins that cause loss of salvation versus those that do not, has no support in Scripture. Ambiguity exists in both of these movements as to the differences.

## Judgments for sin

- 3) Judgments come continually on humanity. Romans 1:18-22
- 4) Judgments are not equally distributed. Luke 13:2-5
- 5) God is the source of all punishment although he uses secondary means.  
[Amos 3:6](#)
- 6) Why do bad things happen to good people? Answer: There are no good people. With regard to the elect, nothing bad happens to them in the sense that everything is designed for our ultimate sanctification. [Romans 8:28](#)

### **Corrective versus retributive punishments**

Corrective punishments are for correcting behavior. Retributive judgments exist because God is just, regardless of whether the punishments are recognized as such by the recipients. Examples are God's annihilation of pagan nations.

Nevertheless, such retributive punishments serve as warnings to the unregenerate even though that is not God's principle motive. God always applies punishment for sin, whether now or later. Even in the case of believers this is legally true, because God has punished Christ in their place.

### **From this we learn...**

- Sin is transgression of God's law. Any other definition is an erroneous human invention.
- Sin is not only an act but a state of being.
- The Roman church distinguishes between sins that cause eternal damnation and those that do not but opinions vary as to what are mortal sins.
- Arminians make the same kind of distinction but their definitions also vary and are unclear.
- God's always judges sin either correctively or retributively

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.268-279 in preparation for the next class.

## [Lesson 15](#): Original Sin - pp.268-279

**Purpose:** Show how the sin of Adam effected the human race and the various views concerning that.

### **Analysis of Romans 5:12-19**

The fall of Adam caused the entry of sin into the world. ([Verse 12](#)) The fall therefore communicated to his descendants four things: sin, death, judgment and condemnation.

The word *sin* in verse 12 is in the third person plural aorist and therefore means that in the moment Adam sinned, all humans committed the act. This is what is meant by *all men sinned in Adam*. The grammatical construction is strong enough to remove doubt as to this interpretation.

[Verse 13](#) Although no law was in existence between Adam and Moses, sin was imputed because all sinned in Adam.

### **Viewpoints**

**Arminian:** Man inherits only a sinful nature but not the actual guilt of Adam. Children are born “innocent” because they have not sinned personally and consciously. Adam’s corruption is inherited but this corruption is not guilt in and of itself. Man’s reason, will and conscience remain entirely intact.

**Roman Catholic:** We inherit the guilt of Adam but baptism removes it. This restores the infant to a state of moral neutrality like Adam had except for the lack of his original righteousness. In agreement with the Arminian— human reason, will and conscience remain intact.

**Reformed:** We inherit the guilt of Adam’s transgression along with sin, death, judgment and condemnation. God views this guilt as personal and chosen because we were legally present in Adam. The notion of innocent children is sentimental. Reason, will and conscience still exist but are enslaved to sin.

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- The doctrine of original sin is held by all branches of Christendom. They vary as to the effect and extent.
- The Reformed view claims the guilt of Adam’s sin is attributed to man as chosen and personal.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 246-247 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 16: Total depravity and inability - pp.246-247

**Purpose:** Show the extent of man's fall relative to any ability to contribute to his salvation or to prepare himself for that.

### **Total depravity means:**

All aspects of a human being are affected by sin and under its control. That includes the mind and will. Man is unable to contribute any spiritual good that would accompany salvation.

### **Total depravity does not mean:**

- 1) People are as bad as they could be or that they desire to be worse.
- 2) People are incapable of appreciating or recognizing virtue.
- 3) Have no external virtues.
- 4) Reason, will or conscience are dysfunctional.
- 5) They are incapable of social justice or religious devotion.

### **Good works of the unregenerate**

See WCF Chapter 16, Art.7 on this point.

None of the works that proceed from man, including those conformed to the law of God though good in themselves, are acceptable to God because they proceed from a corrupted source. All the works of the unregenerate are therefore sinful, even though they may be outwardly praiseworthy. Yet to do otherwise may be even more sinful. Romans 3:9-19

### **Refining definitions**

#### **Total depravity versus utter depravity**

Total depravity means all faculties of man, body and soul, are infected by sin. It does not define the degree to which sin may have captivated any particular faculty. That is an individual matter. Nor does it mean people are as bad as possible. That would be *utter* depravity, like a demon.

#### **Total depravity versus total inability**

In recent years, some have abandoned the term total depravity for *total inability*, because they fear offending people or implying individuals are as bad as they can get away with. The term *inability*, however, insinuates that man is merely spiritually sick rather than dead; weak but not depraved. If people are led to think they have some ability to contribute to their salvation, Christ becomes a mere assistant to our salvation rather than our salvation itself. This is why *total depravity* should be emphasized as the reason for the inability.

### **From this we learn...**

- The Reformed doctrine of total depravity claims that every faculty of fallen man is affected by sin so that he is unable to will or do anything to contribute to his salvation.
- Total depravity does not mean utter depravity.

- The good works of the unregenerate, however good in themselves, are nevertheless sinful because they proceed from a corrupted source.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 292-299// 230-238// 300-332 in preparation for the next class. Handout, Smalling's [Common logic fallacies regarding free will](#).

## [Lesson 17](#): Covenants – pp.292-299// 230-238// 300-332

**Purpose:** Show how God relates to man by covenants; the differences between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

**Definitions:** A covenant is an agreement between two parties. In the Bible two forms exist.

- *Suntheke*: An agreement between two parties as equals, each part giving something to obtain something. The common word “contract” covers this definition.
- *Diatheke*: A legal declaration by a superior with the intention of benefiting an inferior at the former’s expense. The adoption of a child in today’s society is the only legal contract that corresponds to this.

### **Covenant of redemption - pp.292-299**

Definition: The agreement made between the members of the Trinity with regard to the salvation of the elect. This was *suntheke*.

The Trinity as the basis of the covenant: The Father sent the Son, the Son redeemed, the Holy Spirit regenerates.

#### **The role of Christ in the covenant of redemption**

Fulfilled the demands of the law by his life and death as substitute for the elect. [Galatians 4:4,5](#)

Intercede for the elect to guarantee their perfection. [Hebrews 7:25](#); [9:14,15](#); [Romans 8:34](#)

His reward: Head of the church, [Ephesians 1:22](#) and [Colossians 1:18](#); authority over all creation, Colossians 1:13-19; Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:21-23.

### **Covenant of works - pp. 230-238**

Made with Adam. The promise was life, under the condition of obedience— not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The creature owes obedience to the creator.

Adam was representative head over the race, (Romans 5:12-19) This cannot be understood without reference to a covenant. Notice [Hosea 6:7](#) supports this. The fall did not annul the requirement of perfect obedience. Inability to obey is irrelevant.

### **Covenant of grace - pp. 300-332**

This covenant has its origin in the covenant of redemption explained above. It was instituted legally with Abraham as representative of the elect, Genesis 12 and 17. Christ is the supreme elect with whom the covenant was established and by whom the promises are fulfilled.

The unconditional nature of the covenant of grace: Jeremiah 31:31-33; [32:40](#); 33:20-21. It is unconditional from our human perspective. God, in Christ, fulfilled the conditions on behalf of the elect.

### **Relationship with the covenant of works**

Similarities: Perfect obedience is also required as the condition. In this sense, it can be said that the covenant of works is included in the covenant of grace, although it is Christ who fulfills the condition as our substitute.

The law is a final expression of the covenant of works. It is not the final condition for acceptance with God. ([Deuteronomy 5:3](#)) (This is the fundamental error of Adventists.) Christ alone is the final expression of both covenants.

Differences: The key difference between the two covenants is who fulfills the condition of perfect obedience. In the covenant of works, man fulfills the condition. In the covenant of grace, Christ fulfills it as our substitute. The righteousness of the law is imputed to us by faith and not by merit. Romans Chapter 4

## **One covenant or two?**

### **One covenant view**

Since perfect obedience is the condition under both covenants, some theologians say only one covenant exists. The covenant of works is a part of the covenant of grace as a description of the need for perfect obedience. They point out that the righteousness of the law is required for believers but Christ provides that, ([Romans 8:4](#)).

### **Two covenant view**

For some theologians, a two covenant idea is more consistent with retributive justice. In this sense, the covenants of works and grace are distinct. God punishes all who are under works and pardons all under grace.

The allegory of the two covenants presented in Galatians 4 seems to support this view.

The use of the term “new” to describe the covenant of grace is used to support the two covenant idea. However, this can be answered by pointing out that the term “new” is not in the manner of obtaining salvation but in the new revelation that Christ fulfills the condition on our behalf.

## **Blessings of the covenant of grace**

### **In relation to God**

- 1) Justification by faith
- 2) The Holy Spirit [Galatians 3:14](#)
- 3) Eternal security [Hebrews 9:14](#)
- 4) Terrestrial blessings [Matthew 6:33](#) <sup>13</sup>

### **In relation to a community of believers**

- 5) Unity and acceptance in the body of Christ: [Ephesians 4:16](#); [1Corinthians 12:25](#)
- 6) Participation in the sacraments: Matthew 26:27-28; [1Corinthians 10:16](#)
- 7) Access to spiritual gifts: 1Corinthians 12:11-13

### **In relation to the family**

- 8) Covenant baptism: [Acts 2:39](#); [16:31](#)
- 9) Blessings on covenant children: [1Corinthians 7:14](#)

### **Summary**

The comparisons are not so much between different covenants but between two distinct ways to fulfill the condition. Compare [Romans 2:23](#) with [Leviticus 18:5](#), [Romans 10:5](#), [Galatians 3:12](#).

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- God relates to man by covenants. The condition is always perfect obedience.
- The covenant of redemption refers to the agreement among the members of the Trinity regarding the application of salvation to the elect.
- The covenant of works refers to God's promise to grant life because of perfect obedience under the law.
- The covenant of grace refers to God's gracious act of sending Christ to fulfill all the requirements of the law on our behalf.
- Some view the covenants of works and of grace as distinct. Others see one covenant in the Bible since the condition of perfect obedience is required under grace as well.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.102// 352-363// 391-403 in preparation for the next class.

## PART THREE: CHRISTOLOGY

The two natures of Christ; humiliation; exaltation; offices

### Lesson 18: Deity of Christ – pp.102// 352-363// 391-403

**Purpose**: Show the biblical view of the deity of Christ versus early Christian heresies and the relationship between his human and divine natures.

#### **Defining the deity of Christ - pp.102**

The Nicene Creed defines the deity of Christ as coequal with the Father, of the same essence, attributes, dignity, power and authority. He is not a created God.

In addition, incommunicable attributes are attributed to Christ: omnipresence, [Matthew 18:20](#); omnipotence [Matthew 28:18](#); eternal [Micah 5:2](#); forgives sins, Mark 2:5-8.

#### **Deity versus divinity**

Sometimes the term *divinity* is used synonymously with *deity* in conversations about Christ as God. This is technically incorrect although common usage may eventually make the two identical. *Deity* refers to that which is God. *Divinity* refers to that which relates to God in some way. For example, divinity students are not gods but study the deity.

#### **Early errors regarding deity of Christ**

**Gnosticism**: The first attack: Christ was a [demiurge](#). According to Gnosticism, matter is evil and spirit is good. Thus, Christ could not have been completely divine because God cannot associate with evil.

This is refuted by Paul in Colossians 1:15-18. Christ is creator, not a creation. In John 1:3, everything that was *made*, was made by him. Therefore, he is not a being that God the Father “made.” In the second century, the early church father Irenaeus refuted Gnosticism in his treatise **AGAINST HERESIES**.

**Docetism**: Jesus was not a true human at all, just a phantom that seemed to be human.<sup>14</sup> This is a product or off-shoot of Gnosticism. Refuted by [1John 1:3](#) where John expresses that Jesus was truly flesh because they touched him and observed him closely.

**Arianism**: The second major attack: Through the heretic Arius (d.336), came the teaching that Jesus is a lower level god created by the Father. Refuted at the Council of Nicea, 325 A.D.

#### **The impersonality of Christ - pp.352-363**

#### **What is the relationship between the two natures of Christ?**

Are the two natures, human and divine, joined or mixed? Are they like two pieces of wood glued together or like two liquids mixed?

## Hypostatic Union

Joined but not mixed. This means Christ is one person with two natures. The attributes of deity were not lost with the incarnation. Nor did the human part become a god or divine. Yet Jesus is not two different people in one body.

- 1) The attributes are not mixed.
- 2) He is not half man, half god but fully God and fully man.
- 3) Nothing of his humanity became deified.

This results in a perfect cooperative relationship between deity and humanity.

This means Christ is one personality only, not two personalities in communication with one another. (That view is called Nestorianism, after the fifth century heretic Nestorius.<sup>15</sup>) The evidences for this point are:

- 4) He took on our human nature. The key text is Hebrews 2:14-18.
- 5) His entire person receives worship. [Hebrews 1:6](#)
- 6) All his offices such as high priest and intercessor are attributed to his whole person as God-man.

**Liberal view:** Humanity of Jesus became deified. This is the satanic lie of [Genesis 3:5](#).

This premise is the basis of occultism and is the same in liberal theology.

**Lutheran view:** The two natures are mixed.

The motive behind this view is to provide a basis for the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation.<sup>16</sup>

Texts refuting the Lutheran view:

- 7) [Colossians 2:9](#) — Living *in* a body is not the same as being mixed with a body.
- 8) [1Timothy 3:16](#) — *Manifest* in the flesh is not equivalent to being *made* flesh.
- 9) [1Peter 3:18](#) — Being dead in body but alive in spirit shows that the attributes were not mixed inseparably.

The view is inherently irrational. It is impossible to communicate human attributes to the incommunicable; omniscience and omnipresence would be something other than human.

## Kenosis

This theological point is derived from the Greek word in [Philippians 2:6](#) and means *emptying*. It asks the question, is it possible to abandon divine attributes without abandoning deity?

Kenositists say yes, as long as the divine *essence* is not affected.

Anti-Kenositists say no, because his attributes are logically inseparable from his essence. (Berkhof, Hodges)

Some aspects of the problem:

Jesus declared his own inability: [John 5:19,30](#); [8:28](#); [14:10](#)

He declared that his words and works are in fact the Father working in him.

## Names of Christ

Jesus: In the Old Testament, derived from *Yeshua*, “God is salvation.”

Christ: From Greek *Cristos*, anointed. The Greek form of *messiah*.

Son of man: [Daniel 7:13,14](#). A messianic title Jesus used as an allusion to his authority.

### When did Jesus become Christ?

Jesus was always the Christ, i.e., Messiah. This was declared at his birth, [Luke 2:11](#). The present tense is used, ...*who is the Christ*. He was always the savior and therefore always the Christ.

Those who believe in baptismal regeneration sometimes affirm that Jesus became the Christ at his baptism. This is an error.

## Offices of Christ: Prophet, priest and king - pp.391-403

These offices are supremely important for understanding how Christ applies redemption. His priestly office is necessary as intercessor for his people, on the basis of a blood sacrifice, as with the Old Testament priests. This concept is elaborated in Hebrews Chapters 9 and 10.

## Theophanies

This refers to supposed appearances of Jesus in the Old Testament. Among these are the appearance of the three angels to Abraham sent to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah; the appearance of *the commander of the Lord's army* in Joshua 5:15.

However, a textual complication is here. Sometimes an angel appeared in the name of God and spoke in the first person. (Compare Exodus 3:1-15 with Acts 7:30.) God was not present in the burning bush. It was an angel who spoke in the first person as though he were God. This is in agreement with the culture of that time when a king sent messengers to another king. The messenger spoke in the first person in the name of the king. This allows room for doubt as to whether the theophanies were in fact the presence of the pre-incarnate Christ.

### From this lesson we learn...

- The Nicene Creed, 325 A.D., defines the deity of Christ as eternally coequal with the Father and of the same essence and attributes. Anything other than this is heresy.
- In Reformed theology, the two natures of Christ, human and divine are joined but not mixed. This is the hypostatic union. In Lutheran theology, they are mixed.
- The doctrine of *kenosis* deals with the question as to what degree Jesus limited his divine attributes on earth.
- Christ's offices are prophet, priest and king.
- Theophanies refer to supposed appearances of Jesus in the Old Testament.

**Homework reading:** [Nicene Creed Modern Version](#); Berkhof pp.404-441 in preparation for the next class.

## [Lesson 19](#): Atonement - pp.404-441

**Purpose:** Discuss the extent, limitations and benefits of the sacrifice of Christ.

**Atonement:** The appeasement of justice by a sacrifice for wrong committed.

### Concepts involved

The problem to be addressed: The breaking of the divine law. God requires that the demands of the law be satisfied. Romans 3:21-26; [8:3,4](#); [Colossians 2:14](#); [Galatians 4:4,5](#)

**Covering:** (Hebrew: *Kippur*) Once the atonement was completed in the Old Testament, sin was no longer attributed to the person for whom the sacrifice was made. No hypothetical atonements existed in Jewish sacrifices. It was not the mere provision of a possibility of forgiveness but an actual removal of sin.

**Propitiation:** (Greek: *Hilasmos*) The appeasement of the wrath of God. No temporary appeasement existed. Romans 1:25; [1John 2:2](#); [4:10](#)

**Redemption:** The Old Testament custom of freeing a slave by payment.

**Substitution:** Sacrifice of an animal as a substitute for a sin.

### Concepts not involved

#### **Did Christ literally become sin or sinful?**

Christ did not literally become sin nor sinful. The verse in [2 Corinthians 5:21](#) does not support this view. Compare with [Hebrews 10:5,6](#).

The Greek term *hamartia*, relative to the sacrifices of the Old Testament in the [LXX](#) is used around 100 times as “offering for sin.”

The offering for sin was holy at all times, including during the sacrifice. [Leviticus 6:25](#)

#### **The concept of universal redeeming love for all humanity**

This idea is not found in the Old Testament sacrificial system.

### **How are the benefits of the atonement applied?**

Serious differences exist among Christians on how the benefits of the cross are transferred to believers.

**Catholic:** Man transfers the benefits to himself by the sacraments and good works.

**Arminian:** Man transfers the benefits to himself by means of faith and evangelical obedience. This means we obtain salvation initially by faith but must maintain it by our personal obedience.

**Reformed:** Christ himself is the means of transferring the benefits. Man is the beneficiary, not the agent transferring the benefits. Perseverance is a gift of grace purchased for the elect and guarantees their obedience. [1John 3:9](#); [5:14](#)

### Conditional substitution versus penal substitution

#### The life of Christ as part of the atonement

In Reformed theology, the entire life of Christ plus his death was an atoning sacrifice.

Jesus was *born of a woman, born under the law* to redeem those under the law. ([Galatians 4:4,5](#)) This would be unnecessary if living a perfect life as a man under the law had no redemptive significance.

His suffering in life made him perfect in obedience. His obedience is imputed to us. Compare [Hebrews 5:8,9](#) with [Romans 5:10](#).

#### For whom was the atonement made?

**Arminian view:** Christ died to make salvation a possibility for all mankind, depending on how they respond. In this sense, they say Christ died for everyone. This is called *universal atonement*.

**Reformed view:** Christ accomplished salvation for the elect only and guarantees their salvation. This is called *particular redemption or limited atonement*. Redemption is accomplished for the elect, not merely provided and is not intended for all mankind.

The central problem with the universal atonement theory is that it ought to lead logically to the salvation of everybody. If not all are saved, then what does the cross have to do with the salvation of anybody? If Christ paid for the sins of everybody, then why is anyone punished for sin?

The point: The cross is either a hypothetical provision of salvation or a salvation accomplished and applied; a possibility for all or a certainty for some.

#### Arminian arguments refuted

- 1) Some texts say “all men” or “everyone” in reference to the sacrifice of Christ. Answer: “All men” or “everyone” in Scripture means all “without distinction of class or race,” not all “without distinction of person.”
  - i) All believers: [3John 12](#); [Acts 17:31](#); [Acts 2:45](#); [1Corinthians 7:7](#); [Romans 16:19](#)
  - ii) All present: [Mark 5:20](#); [Acts 4:21](#); [20:26](#)
  - iii) People of all kinds: (without exception of class but not without exception of person.) [Mark 1:37](#); [Luke 3:15](#); [John 3:26](#); [13:35](#); [Acts 2:17](#); [21:28](#); [2Corinthians 3:2](#); [2 Timothy 4:16](#); [Titus 2:11](#)
- 2) Texts using the word “world” or “whole world”
  - i) Believers in the world: [Luke 2:1](#); [John 12:19](#).
  - ii) Unbelievers in the world: [John 15:18](#); [16:20](#); [17:14](#); [2Peter 2:5](#); [1John 5:19](#); [Revelation 3:10](#); [13:3](#); [16:14](#).

## False theories of the atonement

All heresies regarding the atonement have this in common: They ignore the need for propitiation of the wrath of God and the fulfillment of justice for wrongdoing.

**Payment to Satan:** That God paid Satan the price of his son to save mankind. This is not taught in Scripture.

**Recapitulation:** Christ lived the life Adam should have lived and so gained merits to pass on to us. Problem: This does not take into account the wrath of God relative to his broken law.

**Moral influence theory:** The cross was principally to reveal the love of God and to identify with sinners in their sufferings.

Other theories are found in Berkhof and may be reviewed if the teacher wishes:

- 3) Example theory
- 4) Governmental theory
- 5) Mystical theory
- 6) Vicarious repentance theory

### From this lesson we learn...

- Atonement means the appeasement of wrongdoing by sacrifice.
- In Reformed theology, the atonement of Christ guaranteed and accomplished the salvation of the elect.
- In Arminian theology, the atonement of Christ provided the possibility of salvation for all mankind, depending on how people respond.
- In Reformed theology, the life of Christ was part of the atonement, not his death only.
- Several false theories of the atonement have in common a disregard of the justice accomplished in the sacrifice of Christ.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 495-502 in preparation for the next class.

## PART FOUR: SOTERIOLOGY

[Lesson 20](#): The role of the Holy Spirit in redemption- pp.495-502

**Purpose:** Identify the personage of the Holy Spirit and his relationship to redemption.

### The personhood of the Holy Spirit

As a member of the Trinity, he is not a mere force but an entity with personality and all the divine attributes.

Note that Peter uses the terms Holy Spirit and God interchangeably. [Acts 5:3-5](#)

#### Masculine singular pronoun- [John 16:8](#)

John uses the pronoun *he* in the masculine singular in reference to the Holy Spirit rather than the neuter. (Greek: *Ekeinos* not *ekeinon*) Although the neuter is normally used in Scripture because the word *spirit* is neuter, apparently John wanted to clarify the personhood of the Holy Spirit.

Cultists such as Jehovah Witnesses point out the use of the neuter to justify their doctrine that the name simply means God's force and not an entity. This is illogical because the use of a neuter in a noun does not necessarily deny personhood, anymore than the use of the feminine gender for table implies a table has the personality of a woman.

### The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

An issue among dispensationalists and Reformed is whether the Holy Spirit actually indwelled Old Testament believers. The question seems settled by [1Peter 1:10-11](#).

Another question is whether regeneration took place in the Old Testament. The affirmative seems supported by [Psalms 51:11](#). Also, Jesus spoke of regeneration to Nicodemus in John 3, well before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

### Gifts of the Holy Spirit

See handout by Smalling: [Cessationism versus Continuationism](#)

### Mystical Union

The teaching that Christians are joined with Christ spiritually by having the Holy Spirit in common. This is portrayed frequently in Scripture, particularly in the writings of Paul with the terms *in Christ* or *in him*. This however, does not make Christians a part of God in any sense.

#### The grounds of this union

**Legally:** It stems from the covenant of redemption between the members the Trinity. Christ became our guarantor by his sacrifice which made him our mediator. See Hebrews 7:11-27.

**Experientially:** The application of this union comes after we believe and the Holy Spirit is given to us. [Ephesians 1:13](#)

Roman Catholicism teaches that a mystical union exists but comes through the mediation of the church as it applies the sacraments. Biblically, this is an error because the sacraments are for those who are already Christians and therefore cannot be the cause of the union itself.

### **Saved by his love?**

The mystical union is based on the blood of Christ, not on his love. It is motivated by love but love itself is not the cause. Example: Fornicators may imagine themselves joined spiritually because they are in love. This love may be real but it is without legal foundation. Love is never a justifiable motivation for sin.

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity with all the attributes as God.
- The personhood of the Holy Spirit is not mitigated by the use of the neuter pronoun in New Testament Greek. This is an anomaly of language only.
- The Holy Spirit is the member of the Trinity responsible for the union of Christ with his people.

**Homework reading:** Smalling's [Cessationism versus Continuationism](#); Berkhof pp.477-479 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 21: Saving grace versus common grace – pp.477-479

**Purpose:** Define the difference between common versus saving grace and refute errors concerning them.

### **Definitions of saving grace**

- Reformed-biblical view: The active favor of God, irresistible.
- Arminian: God's favor, resistible, a response for man's free will.
- Catholic: A quality in a person that deserves divine favor.

### **Common grace**

General blessings of God on mankind for the preservation of the race. [Matthew 5:45](#); [Acts 14:17](#); [1Timothy 4:10](#)

#### **A danger**

Some movements mix common grace with saving grace as a part of salvation. Reformed theology does not mix these two because the doctrine of election reserves saving grace for the elect only.

Some claim common grace was purchased on the cross, insinuating that Christ died with the intention of saving everyone. Through the provision of common grace, salvation is made possible for all, depending on how they respond to the revelation of God by their free will. Some Arminians seem to hold to this kind of thinking.

**Catholicism:** If we "improve" on the common grace we all have, God will give us more to aid us in the process of meriting saving grace.

#### **Refutations**

- 1) Scripture makes it clear it is the effectual call of God to the elect that enables man to believe, with no specification as to what the cause may be other than God's activity. Some erroneously use the term *effectual* in the sense of "powerful" which is not the meaning of effectual call. *Effectual* means it will infallibly accomplish the purpose intended.
- 2) Saving faith is linked with the elect only. [Acts 13:48](#); [18:27](#); [John 6:44,65](#); [10:26](#)
- 3) Intermixing common and saving grace insinuates that salvation is a cooperative work between God and man. That is heresy.
- 4) This mixture teaches we receive grace based on our degree of response.
- 5) It assumes that fallen man is not spiritually dead but merely incapacitated though not so much that he cannot turn to God on his own initiative. That is contrary to Scripture. [Ephesians 2:1](#)

### **From this we learn..**

- Saving grace, according to the Reformed view, is the active favor of God to the elect only and is irresistible.

- Common grace is the blessing of God on mankind in general that has nothing to do with eternal salvation.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.503-531 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 22: General call versus effectual call - pp.503-531

**Purpose:** Explain the difference between the call of God in general to humanity versus his special call to the elect.

### **Definition of effectual call**

The divine act by which God draws to Christ a sinner through the word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in such a way that the sinner comes willingly and inevitably, [Romans 8:30](#), [John 6:44](#). Sometimes this is referred to as *irresistible grace* or *special call*.

#### **What effectual call does not mean**

- That God forces people against their will.
- That God puts people in the position of moral neutrality to decide for themselves independently of God's influence.

### **The relationship between effectual call and regeneration**

Such a distinction is not necessary, if regeneration is the implanting of new life in a spiritually dead sinner. Thus, the idea of *call* refers to God's use of the gospel as the means by which that life is implanted. Therefore, theological discussion on this point is more academic than useful.

### **General call**

The act of God by which he calls everyone to repentance without regard to whether they are elect or not.

The Holy Spirit is active in the general call by bringing conviction of sin. (John 16:6-8; Acts 7:51,57; Hebrews 6:1-4) The refusal of the non elect to respond to this call by repentance, justifies God's condemnation of them.

The purpose of the general call confirms the righteousness of God's decree of reprobation, ([Romans 1:21,24](#)). He allows them to harden themselves.

The purpose of the general call is not to give an *opportunity* for salvation because mankind has already had three opportunities without the gospel: God's revelation in nature (Romans 1:18-20), the law ([Romans 2:14](#)) and conscience ([Romans 1:15](#)).

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- The effectual call refers to God's act of drawing the elect to himself, irresistibly and infallibly.
- The general call is God's command to all mankind to repent, regardless of who is elect. The refusal of the reprobate to respond to this call confirms the justice of God's decree of condemnation.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.547-585 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 23: Faith, justification, security – pp.547-585

**Purpose:** Compare Reformed, Arminian, Catholic and liberal views of faith, justification and security of salvation.

### **Saving faith - pp.547-566**

#### **Reformed view**

A gift of God enabling a person to believe in Christ, granted to the elect alone through the miracle of regeneration.

Why is it necessary to emphasize to our converts that saving faith is a gift of grace? So they may not suppose that faith is a meritorious virtue.

#### **Catholic**

Believing in the ability of the Catholic Church to dispense grace through the sacraments. Faith is a meritorious virtue through which one earns mercy. The righteousness of Christ is not imputed because faith is meritorious in itself.

When Catholic theologians affirm justification by faith, what are they truly saying? They are asserting that a person must earn the right to be justified by faith by his or her virtue and good works.

#### **Liberalism**

A healthy attitude of trust in something, regardless of what may be the object of trust.

### **Justification - pp.567-585**

#### **Reformed view**

Saving faith has its origin in sovereign regeneration, an act of God in which the sinner is entirely passive. It is a gift of grace that leads to the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. [Ephesians 2:8,9](#)

#### **Arminian view**

- 1) Faith is the basis of justification. God accepts it in place of the righteousness of the law. Faith is generated out of the free will of man.
- 2) Justification consists only in the forgiveness of sins and not in the imputation of a perfect legal righteousness.
- 3) Justification can be lost through mortal sins.

#### **Catholic view**

- 4) Justification is the initial forgiveness of the sin of Adam through baptism. Faith is unnecessary.
- 5) Baptism grants an initial state of grace by which the person can start on the road to earning salvation by merits along with faith in and obedience to the Catholic church.
- 6) Justification can be lost through mortal sin but recovered through the sacrament of penance.

### What are the practical consequences of justification?

According to Berkhof, justification itself has no practical consequences because it is a legal declaration by God and nothing more. The practical consequences of conversion come as a result of regeneration and the imparting of the Holy Spirit but not from justification itself. These consequences are:

- Freedom from the power of sin.
- New desire for righteousness.

### Emphasis on works in James Chapter 2

Catholics affirm this chapter teaches justification by a combination of faith plus works.

According to [verse 18](#), James is talking about regenerated people. Therefore, he is simply describing the practical consequences of saving faith.

Abraham was already justified by faith before he offered Isaac, according to [Genesis 15:6](#). Therefore, Abraham's works were merely a confirmation of the justification he already had by faith.

The term *justification* in James 2, as in other places of the New Testament, does not mean be *made* righteous but *declared* righteous. Therefore, the works of Abraham and Rehab testified to the righteousness they already received by faith.

### Does this lead to libertarianism?

Some say the doctrine of justification by faith without works leads to libertarianism. See [Jude 4](#) for an explanation of what happens to people who imagine they can use grace as a license for sin.

### False faith

Explain to the students that many psychological and emotional phenomena occur that simulate faith. Some examples are found in the following texts:

Matthew 7:21-23; Acts 8:13, 18-24; [1John 3:10](#)

Show the students that even the apostles had difficulty in detecting false believers. The entire book of 1John is dedicated to this problem.

## Security of salvation

What is the basis for a Christian declaring he or she has security of salvation? Is it possible to have such security in this life?

### Reformed

Security of salvation is a certainty, based on the faithfulness of Christ to preserve his elect. This security is a product of other doctrines: election, justification and covenantal promises. The obedience of the believer is a *consequence* of his security, not the cause of it.

### Catholic

Security is the confidence that one has attained sufficient merits to earn God's favor.

### **Arminian**

The feeling that one has attained to a sufficient degree of obedience and faith so that scant probability exists of falling away.

### **Liberal**

The conviction that faith itself (not necessarily in God) is a virtue that will sustain a person through life's struggles, regardless of what one believes.

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- According to the Reformed view, saving faith is a gift of God for the elect, enabling them to trust in Christ.
- Justification is the declaration by God that a person is righteous because of the righteousness of Christ imputed by faith.
- Faith has counterfeits that can be confused with the real thing, as James Chapter 2 describes.
- Security of salvation in Reformed thinking is based on the promises of God to preserve his people. It is connected to justification and election.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 586-605 in preparation for the next class.

## [Lesson 24](#): Sanctification - pp.586-605

**Purpose:** Define the two meanings of sanctification relative to redemption along with refutation of common errors.

### Two basic ideas in sanctification

#### Separation

Set apart for the service of God. This is the primary meaning of sanctification in the Bible. In this sense, it has nothing to do with the moral state of the person or object set aside. The term is used of vessels as well as persons; even of Christ who is intrinsically holy.

#### Made holy

The process of becoming holy by conformity to the will of God.

In reference to God, what is the meaning of, *You alone are holy*? (Revelation 15:4) God's holiness is intrinsic and that of man's is acquired.

### Distinction between legal sanctification verses experiential

Through the imputation of the perfect righteousness of Christ at conversion, God views the believer as legally perfect. (See study on [justification](#).) Over a lifetime, the believer experiences an increase in holiness through the practice of obedience.

Legal sanctification is entirely a work of God. Experiential sanctification is a cooperative work between God and man as the Christian learns to grow spiritually.

Failure to make this distinction leads to confusion such as that of the so-called holiness movements below.

#### Perfectionism – pp.598-600

Some movements claim it is possible for a Christian to attain to sinless perfection in this life.

This view, promulgated by the Arminian evangelist John Wesley in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, was picked up by the Nazarene denomination, founded in 1906. According to perfectionism, a Christian may have a post-conversion experience, perhaps years after being born again, in which his remaining adamic nature is eradicated and he does not sin anymore. Mistakes, yes, but not sins.

This view is refuted by such texts as [Hebrews 10:14](#) and [Philippians 3:12](#) which portray sanctification in the present continuous tense as a process. The Hebrews text, in particular, shows the difference between our legal standing versus experiential.

The apostle John has sharp language for believers who claim they never sin.  
([1John 1:8](#))

The perfectionism error is also refuted by [2Corinthians 7:1](#). The Bible makes no distinctions between sins of the flesh and those of the spirit. All sin is imputed to the entire person.

Also, Paul exhorts single people to be holy in body and spirit. Such an exhortation would be unnecessary if the spirit of a Christian were already perfect. [1Corinthians 7:32](#)

See Berkhof pp.600-602 for a good refutation of earthly perfectionism.

### **Sanctification as a work of grace**

- 1) Though the believer works at his sanctification, the source of the zeal to do so is God. [Philippians 2:12,13](#)
- 2) The credit for final sanctification belongs to God. [Isaiah 26:12](#)
- 3) The granting of reward for our works and sanctification is by grace because God owes us nothing for the obedience we owe him. [Luke 17:10](#)
- 4) Final sanctification is guaranteed to the believer. [1Thessalonians 5:23,24](#)

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- The term *sanctification* means primarily “set apart for God’s service,” and secondarily “made holy.”
- Christians have a legal sanctification imputed at conversion but learn to practice holiness throughout life.
- Some movements teach falsely that a Christian can attain to perfect holiness in this life.
- Sanctification, both legally and experientially, is a work of grace.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 458-461; 464-466 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 25: Ordo Salutis – pp.458-461; 464-466

**Purpose:** Explain the biblical order of events in salvation in contrast to erroneous views.

**Definition:** Ordo salutis is Latin for *order of events* in salvation. This point discusses which comes first, faith or regeneration, justification or adoption and such.

### **Why is the ordo salutis important?**

A correct understanding of:

- 1) The sovereignty of God
- 2) The efficacy of the cross
- 3) Free will
- 4) Security of salvation

The Reformed ordo salutis is: Election, effectual call, regeneration, faith, justification, adoption, glorification.

This order is a logical one but not chronological. Regeneration, faith and justification all take place at the same moment. Yet a logical order exists between them. There is, for example, no justification without faith.

Berkhof illustrates it by the example, “Open your eyes and see.” This is a single event but logically speaking, opening the eyes is necessary for seeing.

### **Key point: the relationship between faith and regeneration**

#### **Reformed**

Saving faith is a gift of the grace of God given through regeneration, resulting invariably in the justification of the elect. The unregenerate do not have the kind of faith that could save them. God is the cause of saving faith and works it into the will of man by the Holy Spirit. Without this, a person could never come to Christ. [John 6:44](#)

#### **Arminian**

Saving faith is necessary for justification but is not a gift of grace. Everyone has faith necessary for salvation. One must choose to put faith in Christ instead of other things. Man generates faith from within himself by an act of will. Arminians agree with the Reformed view that faith is active but differ as to the cause.

#### **Lutheran**

Faith is passive. It means not resisting Christ. If a sinner chooses to not resist the gospel, God will save him. Faith is not active.

#### **Catholic**

Faith is active but is simply a necessary component to motivate the person to perform works required for salvation. Furthermore, the faith required is trusting that the teachings of the church are correct and that the church is able to dispense grace through the sacraments. Personal faith in Jesus Christ is not necessary. Faith and works are in a cooperative relationship to produce the possibility that a person may be able to save himself.

**From this lesson we learn...**

- Ordo salutis refers to the order of events in salvation.
- All branches of Christendom hold that faith is necessary but differ as to the meaning.
  - Reformed: Saving faith is a gift of grace given to the elect only.
  - Arminian: Saving faith is not a gift of grace but is generated out of the free will of man.
  - Lutheran: Saving faith is a passive non-resistance to the gospel.
  - Catholic: Saving faith is trusting the church to dispense grace by means of sacraments.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 606-613 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 26: Perseverance and preservation - pp.606-613

**Purpose:** Explain the Reformed view of the security of the believer in contrast with Arminian and Baptist concepts.

### **Definitions**

Perseverance and preservation is the name of the doctrine, divided into two parts.

Perseverance refers to the Scripture injunctions requiring Christians to persevere to the end. Preservation is a gift of grace to ensure that the believer perseveres.

This gift of grace for the elect preserves them from ultimately and finally apostatizing from the faith. God accomplishes this by spurring believers on through reproaches, fatherly corrections, exhortations and fear of falling away.

### **The paradox in the doctrine of preservation**

God uses means to fulfill his purposes. The means for preservation is the work of the Spirit in pursuing preservation.

Arminians misunderstand the Epistle to the Hebrews. The intent of the writer was to warn Jews who were toying with Christianity and avoiding a firm decision in favor of the gospel.

#### **How does God preserve his people?**

By putting fear of him in their hearts. Jeremiah 32:40 — *And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.*

Preservation is a gift of grace in the same sense that saving faith is a gift. Although we are responsible for it, we cannot do it adequately. Thus, God grants a special ability to the elect to help them persevere and watches over them to ensure they arrive in heaven.

### **Comparison of Arminian and Baptist doctrines**

Both of these positions are distortions of the original reformation position. Each contains a particular element of the Reformed view.

The question at the heart of the matter is, Can a Christian lose his salvation?

#### **Arminian**

Yes, under the condition that the sins are mortal ones or that the person openly denies Christ. This actually happens to some people, according to the Arminian viewpoint. In this sense, the Arminian agrees with Catholicism as to the difference between mortal and venial sins, although no Arminian counsel has defined exactly what these are.

#### **Baptist**

No, a person cannot lose their salvation under any condition. This is commonly called among Baptists the doctrine of eternal security.

## Reformed

Hypothetically, yes but in practice, no. A believer could lose his salvation because of apostasy but God preserves his people from that. He puts the fear of apostasy in their hearts and by that preserves them from it. The warnings are real but in practice God sees to it that they do not fulfill that condition.

Can a Christian lose his salvation? Answer: Without the grace of God, he most certainly will. With the grace of God, he most certainly won't.

## Evidences for the Reformed view

### Texts showing God preserves his people

[2Timothy 4:18](#); [1Thessalonians 5:23-24](#); [2Thessalonians 3:3](#); [Jude 24](#); [Psalm 31:23](#); [37:28](#); [97:10](#); [145:20](#); [Philippians 1:6](#); [2Timothy 4:18](#); [1John 5:18](#)

### Doctrines pointing to preservation

Election, limited atonement, effectual call, the covenant promises, the efficacy of the intercessory ministry of Christ.

The Epistle of 1John infers it is possible for believers to obtain this security. [1John 5:13](#)

## From this lesson we learn...

- The doctrine of perseverance and preservation means that God grants as a gift of grace to the elect that they will persevere to the end.
- God uses practical means to preserve his people including exhortations, paternal discipline and warnings.
- Arminians hold that a Christian can lose his salvation through mortal sins.
- Baptists hold that a saved person cannot lose his salvation.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 614-615; 626-628; 648-651 in preparation for the next class.

## PART FIVE: ECCLESIOLOGY AND THE MEANS OF GRACE

### Lesson 27: Ecclesiology - pp.614-615; 626-628; 648-651

**Purpose:** Explain the biblical concept of church, the difference between visible and invisible plus the three most common forms of government used.

#### **Definition: Study of the church**

The term comes from the Greek *ekklesia*: called out. This implies a calling from God to separation from the world.

See various uses of *ekklesia* in Berkhof pp.614-615.

#### **Visible versus invisible church**

Protestants of nearly all branches distinguish between the visible and invisible church. The visible refers to a local congregation that can be observed meeting together. Such will necessarily include a mixture of saved and unsaved people.

The invisible church refers to all those saved, living or dead, throughout time. It is visible only to God. Other terms for this distinction are *local* versus *universal* church.

Certain texts such as [1Corinthians 1:2](#) support this distinction. The apostle Paul seemed to view the church, even in its local setting, as more of an organism than an organization, united directly to Christ by the Holy Spirit, [Ephesians 5:30](#), [1Corinthians 6:15](#).

#### **An erroneous practice**

Pietism, along with some Baptists, tries to make the visible church equal to the invisible by asking everyone about their experience with the Lord, to discern if they are really saved. This is a praiseworthy goal but an unscriptural procedure. See the parable of the tares and wheat in [Matthew 13:30](#). The same with Israel. God treated the entire body of Jews as his people although some were not saved.

#### **The apostolic rule of charity**

This means treating everyone according to their profession of faith, although we may suspect that some are not regenerate. [Galatians 4:20](#); [2Corinthians 13:5](#)

The Bible reveals it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between regenerate and unregenerate. Some churches attempt to discern the difference by external practices that lead to legalism. For example, some forbid going to movies or listening to music that is not Christian. Such externals are not valid criteria of regeneration.

Other groups measure spirituality by the degree of fervor in worship. The Bible never mentions style of worship as evidence of regeneration or even of any degree of spirituality.

#### **Characteristics of a true church in its visible expression - pp.633-636**

The minimum requirements of a true church in Reformed tradition are:

- 1) Faithful preaching of the Scriptures.
- 2) Administration of the sacraments.
- 3) Biblical discipline.

**In addition to the above, the ideal is:**

- 4) Purity of testimony.
- 5) Purity of doctrine, without sectarian attitudes.
- 6) Purity of organization.
- 7) Purity of worship.

**When is it proper to leave a church?**

- 8) If the church begins to practice idolatry. [2Corinthians 6:16,17](#)
- 9) If a false gospel is preached; another gospel than justification by faith alone in Christ alone. Galatians 1:8-10
- 10) When the church becomes indistinguishable from the world in its lack of holiness.. [1Corinthians 5:1](#)

## Three kinds of church government

Church government is defined by who has final authority.

### **Episcopal - pp.642**

All authority resides in one man, such as a bishop. The term is taken from the Greek *episkopos*, overseer. This form denies the right of the congregation to participate in decisions. The bishop makes the decisions. Ordinations are by bishop.

Churches may use other words than bishop. Some evangelical churches are run by one man, the pastor, who has final authority. Other officers are merely his assistants. This could be classed as an episcopal form of government.

Catholicism is the supreme example of this form.

### **Congregational - pp.643**

Final authority resides in the congregation by democratic vote. The church officers are employees of the congregation and work according to its will. Ordinations are by the congregation.

### **Presbyterian/Reformed - pp.644-648**

Authority resides in committees of elders. The term is derived from the Greek *presbiteros*, elder. It is a plural eldership form of government. In this sense, it is the opposite of episcopal. The congregation does not have final authority. The congregation, however, has a right to vote for its officers, although this vote is simply a recommendation to the local body of elders. Ordination is performed by the elders, not the congregation.

Other denominations than Presbyterian use this form of government: Christian Reformed and Assemblies of God for example.

## Pros and cons in each form of government

## Episcopal

Internal politicking and struggling for status is less because only one man has authority. It is essentially dictatorial. People normally dislike dictatorships and feel uncomfortable without voice in church affairs.

This form can be hierarchical which tends toward incompetence. It creates an unbiblical distinction between church officers and laymen. It deals quickly with discipline because one man is the judge and jury. This may not be unbiased but at least it gets done.

## Congregational

People feel ownership of the church.

There is, however, a lot of internal politicking: gossip and frequent division. Doctrine becomes a question of congregational vote, which is dangerous.

The pastor becomes obliged to please the congregation in order to maintain his job. Voting may take place periodically to see if the church retains their pastor.

Discipline is weak and gets applied only in very serious cases because pastors fear provoking division.

## Presbyterian

Positive:

- People feel a degree of voice in church government because they can vote for the officials who lead them.
- The concept of a [\*multitude of counselors\*](#) is wise because the Presbytery can intervene in case of serious internal problems.
- An officer cannot be removed by the congregation but only by the body that ordained him. Note: This sounds lovely in theory but in practice, this is not what happens. A Presbyterian pastor must please his congregation to some degree to remain in office.

Negative:

- A Presbytery is a committee. Slowness and inefficiency tend to characterize committees.
- Occasionally problems arise in a church or Presbytery that require radical action to resolve expediently. The committee style of a Presbytery tends to avoid measures that may require immediate or drastic resolution. It is like a doctor who does very well most of the time but poorly in the emergency room.
- In disciplinary situations, the slowness of the judicial process and the right of appeal to a seemingly endless string of committees, commissions and courts tends to postpone the application of justice. Eventually justice may be served but Satan takes advantage of the delays to create confusion, bitterness and the loss of people.
- Presbyterianism tends to try to resolve spiritual problems by rules and regulations. Some spiritual problems cannot be treated by rules but need to be dealt with spiritually. Demons are not cast out by rules.

- When a church in the Presbytery becomes very large and influential, it tends to ignore the Presbytery. It may view the Presbytery as merely a body of counselors without real authority. Some pastors of such churches avoid attending Presbytery meetings, even though the Presbyterian **BOOK OF CHURCH ORDER** requires it.

## Officers of the church

Berkhof distinguishes between ordinary and extraordinary officers.

Elders in [Ephesians 4:11,12](#).

### Extraordinary

Apostles: Do they exist today? A good dissertation on this is Berkhof, pp.648. Note: The one thing apostles had in common is the authority to establish the body of Christ universal, [Ephesians 2:20](#). The church is founded on them. No others have this distinction.

Prophets: These arguably may exist today but their ministry is different from the Old Testament type, a point Jesus made clear in [Luke 16:16](#). Assuming the existence of the prophetic gift today, it would appear limited to edification, exhortation and comfort. ([1Corinthians 14:3](#)) The infallible authority to command others is absent.

Evangelists: Berkhof names this under the category of extraordinary and therefore not extant. Presbyterians consider this to be an ordinary office. They refer to these as *Teaching Elders out-of-bounds*, meaning outside the geographical limits of a Presbytery; such as a missionary.

### Ordinary

Evangelist: See above..

Pastor-teacher: It is disputable if these are two offices or one. The form of grammar in the original Greek seems to link these two nouns as one. The pastor performs his shepherding function through teaching. The word “teacher” would therefore function as a description of the way the pastor fulfills his ministry.

Those who say *pastor-teacher* describes two different offices have some difficult questions to answer. Is it possible to have a pastor who cannot teach? Is such really a pastor? Or, does it make sense for a teacher to teach effectively without doing any shepherding? Is that biblical teaching?

Deacons: An office under the authority of elders involved in the administration of the material aspects of the church and works of charity.

## May women be ordained to any of the church offices?

With regard to elders, Paul tells us they must be the husband of one wife, [1Timothy 3:2](#). That settles the issue. See Smalling’s essay on [ordination of women](#).

Women and the office of deaconess is more complex. See Smalling's essay on [Deaconesses](#).

**From this lesson we learn...**

- The church may be understood as both visible and invisible:
  - The visible body of believers that meets for worship.
  - All those saved everywhere throughout time.
- A true church is characterized by faithful preaching of the Scriptures, administration of the sacraments and biblical discipline.
- Forms of government can be understood in three categories: Episcopal, Congregational and Presbyterian.
- Church officers can be categorized in two main headings: Elders and deacons.
- The offices of elder are apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor-teacher. Reformed theology views the first two as non extant.
- In historic Reformed theology, women may not hold ecclesiastical offices, although some dispute exists about women holding the office of deaconess.

**Homework reading:** Handout, Smalling's essay on [Deaconesses](#); Berkhof pp.739-743 in preparation for the next class.

Note: If the teacher wishes, he may do a brief review of the sacraments, P.722-790. No lesson plan exists for this subject because this is a separate course.

## PARTE SIX: ESCHATOLOGY

### Lesson 28: State of man after death - pp.739-743

**Purpose:** Explain the various views of the afterlife in Christianity.

#### **Biblical doctrine of afterlife**

Only two states after death exist: heaven or hell.

- 1) Hell is not eternal. The lake of fire is the final dwelling of the unsaved. See [Revelation 20:14](#).
- 2) The soul is separated from the body after death, 2Corinthians 5:1-5; [Revelation 6:9](#)
- 3) Everyone appears before the judgment seat of Christ, whether saved or lost. See [Revelation 20:12](#); Matthew 25:31,32; [2Corinthians 5:10](#).
- 4) Those who go to heaven are perfected. We do not know how.

#### **Errors regarding death**

Note: The teacher may use verses from the above mentioned chapters to refute these. Some of the notions below have their origin in human sentimentality. A person's limited perspective of God's justice may override sound biblical hermeneutics.

##### **Soul sleep - pp.762**

This is held by Adventists. The soul is asleep in the grave until the resurrection of the body.

##### **Annihilation 764-776**

The wicked are burned up in hell and destroyed completely. They do not suffer eternally. This is a view held by some Jehovah Witnesses.

##### **Universal redemption**

After a period of time in hell, for the purpose of purification and conversion, the wicked are saved and afterwards go to heaven. This includes Satan and all the demons.

##### **Purgatory - pp.760**

An intermediate state between heaven and hell in which the venial sins of Christians are expiated through suffering in order to prepare them for paradise. This views the cross as an incomplete sacrifice in which Christ died for mortal sins but not venial. The latter must be atoned for by personal suffering, either in this life or in purgatory. In Catholic thinking, suffering has inherent meritorious value.

##### **Second chance - pp.763**

This is a category of doctrines with the same thread in common: the idea that some people have not had a sufficient opportunity to repent and accept Christ. God therefore grants a second opportunity after death to accept Christ.

Such doctrine is based on false premises:

- 5) The assumption that fallen man has lacked adequate revelation is refuted by Romans 1:18-20, which declares God has reveal himself in nature to every

sentient human being who ever lived and they are without excuse. Though they have not rejected Christ if they have heard of him, they have rejected God the Father as revealed in nature.

- 6) Another opportunity has been the revelation of God's holiness in mankind's conscience, which they ignore. Romans 2:14,15
- 7) Finally, the second chance doctrines assume that fallen man has the ability to take advantages of spiritual opportunities without a special work of grace. See the lesson on [Total Depravity](#).

**From this lesson we learn...**

- The Bible teaches two states of afterlife: heaven and hell (followed by the lake of fire.)
- Catholicism teaches an intermediate state called purgatory. This is not found in Scripture.
- Because of human limitations in perspectives of God's justice, some have been tempted to invent unbiblical views of the afterlife.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.770 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 29: Eschatological Systems - pp.770

**Purpose:** Explain the main prophetic views regarding the second coming of Christ with the establishment of the visible kingdom of God. Eschatology means the study of end things. Greek: *eschatos*, end.

### **Premillennialism - pp.785-798**

The views under this category claim that Christ will return before the 1000 year millennium mentioned in Revelation 20. See Berkhof's explanation of the two points below.

- Historic premillennialism (Premillennialism of the past)
- Modern premillennialism (Premillennialism of the present)

### **The second coming of Christ**

The second coming is sometimes called in theology the *parousia*, appearance.

#### **Pre-tribulation**

Christ will return before the supposed seven year tribulation to remove his church from the earth so Christians may not suffer.

Proposed in 1830 by Margaret MacDonald in Scotland through extra biblical revelations and visions. It was picked up later by Schofield and published in his Bible notes in 1909. From there, it spread to Baptist churches and others. See McClellan's book on the origin of the rapture theory.<sup>17</sup>

#### **Mid-tribulation**

This view claims that Christ will come for his church half way through the tribulation period. This is based on a "trumpet" argument by comparing [1Thessalonians 4:16](#) with [Revelation 11:15](#).

#### **Post-tribulation**

The view that Christ will return after the tribulation and before the millennium to rescue his church.

### **Post millennial views**

#### **Post millennialism - pp.794-797**

Christ will return after the 1000 year reign of the church during which the church will have established God's kingdom on earth through the successful preaching of the gospel. Some view the 1000 year period as not literal but merely the time it takes the church to establish the reign of Christ on earth before his physical presence.

#### **Amillennialism**

The view that the millennium in Revelation 20 represents a period of time, however long, between the first and second coming of Christ. We are now in the millennium in that sense. Amillennialists point out that the premillennial concept of the millennium as a utopia is a fiction added by Schofield and other theologians and is not found in the Revelation text.

Amillennialism is the view held widely in Reformed circles and is the doctrine expressed in the final chapters of the Westminster Confession.

## Problems with premillennialism

Claims to be able to outline a chronology of events previous to the coming of Christ. Jesus taught this is impossible. [Acts 1:7](#); [Matthew 24:36](#)

One of the two Greek terms for time, *kronos*, refers to the sequence of events in time, such as *chronology*. Thus, any eschatological system presenting a detailed chronology of events leading to the second coming is false and deserves no further consideration. No difference exists between this and trying to predict the day of the second coming.

Premillennialism denies the general resurrection of all mankind as one event. (Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43) Without scriptural warrant, it divides the resurrection of mankind into separate events, one for the saved and the other for the lost. (See the parables of the tares and wheat and the nets; [Daniel 12:2](#); Matthew 25; [John 5:28,29](#); [Acts 24:15](#); Revelation 20.)

Poor hermeneutics: Premillennialism bases its thinking on one ambiguous chapter in a book the author says is to be taken figuratively, Chapter 20 of Revelation. In Revelation 1:1, John uses the phrase *made known*, which translates the Greek word *semnaino* which means “to indicate by a sign.”<sup>18</sup> This means “symbols.” The descriptions of events may not be literal. Literalist interpretations of Revelation therefore stand on shaky ground. It cannot be proven that the 1000 years in Revelation 20 must be taken literally.

Though some premillennialists boast of their literal interpretation of the Bible, elements are found in premillennial eschatology that cannot be interpreted literally. Examples: In Matthew 13 and 25, each of these parables describe one general resurrection, one second coming and one judgment.

Christ made it clear that his second coming would not be accompanied with *signs*. Matthew 24:36-39; 42-44.

Premillennialism uses the term “last days” as meaning the period of time just before the return of Christ. However, the last days began at Pentecost according [Acts 2:16,17](#). See also [Hebrews 1:2](#); [1John 2:18](#).

Premillennialism claims the reign of Christ is future, not present.

- 1) According to [Matthew 4:17](#), his kingdom exists now.
- 2) It is spiritual and invisible. Luke 17:20,21
- 3) It does not belong to Israel. [Luke 12:32](#); [Revelation 11:15](#)
- 4) It will end when Jesus gives over the kingdom to the Father. 1Corinthians 15:24-28
- 5) It ignores that the end of the world will take place at the second coming, with new heavens and new earth. 2Peter 3:10-13

## Problems with amillennialism

- 6) This view fails to take into account certain Old Testament texts that appear to speak of a future glory of Israel. (Zechariah 14 and certain chapters in Isaiah.) To this, amillennialists affirm:
- i) These texts are conditional promises, not prophecies. Since Israel never fulfilled the conditions, the promises will never be granted.
  - ii) These texts can be interpreted figuratively regarding the future glory of Israel. An example is the coming of Elijah before the coming of the messiah. This was not literal. Matthew 11:13-15

**From this lesson we learn...**

- Eschatology is the study of prophecies related to the return of Christ and the establishment of his visible kingdom.
- Three categories of views:
  - Premillennial — Christ will return previous to the 1000 years millennium mentioned in Revelation 20.
    - Premillennial views, in turn, can be divided into three categories: Pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, post tribulation. The tribulation refers to a supposed period of seven years of apocalyptic judgments.
  - Postmillennial — Christ will return after the 1000 years millennium.
  - Amillennial — The millennium is symbolic of the period between the two comings of Christ.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 814-818 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 30: Final states after death – pp.814-818

### **The final state of the wicked - pp.816-817**

Scripture describes the fate of the unregenerate as eternal torment, popularly called *hell*. However, contrary to popular belief, hell is not the final abode of the lost. In [Revelation 20:14,15](#) we read that death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire.

No clear scriptural data is available to distinguish between the characteristics of hell versus the lake of fire. The torment is eternal. [Revelation 20:14](#); [Revelation 14:11](#)

Most of the information we have about hell is derived from Christ himself. [Mark 9:43](#)

Some groups teach a doctrine of annihilation, that the lost will be burned up and eternally lost. This is refuted by the above verses.

### **Final state of the saved - pp.818**

Scripture clearly teaches that the souls of the saved go to the presence of the Lord. This is considered an absence from the body. Paul expressed this in [Philippians 1:22,24](#). Peter likened the body to a tent in which we dwell and will leave, [2Peter 1:3](#).

The view that heaven is the eternal abode of the saved is a popular error. The eternal dwelling of the saved is the renewed earth with the return of Christ. This is plainly taught in Revelation 21:1-4.

## **Judgment**

### **Saved**

Scripture indicates that all mankind, saved and lost, will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. [Romans 14:10,12](#); [2Corinthians 5:10](#).

Judgment for Christians will be for rewards in service for Christ. Works not done under God's direction will receive no reward. God's work must be done God's way under his guidance. 1Corinthians Chapter 3.

Berkhof claims that the sins of the redeemed after they were saved will be reviewed but then forgiven. This seems unlikely, however, in view of scriptural teachings on the completed nature of the imputed righteousness of Christ in justification.

### **Unsaved pp. 814-817**

Judgment on the unsaved will be an evaluation of their sins and therefore a justification of God's decree of eternal punishment. Revelation 20

The degree and kind of punishments will vary. [Matthew 11:24](#); [Luke 12:47,48](#); - pp.817

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- The final state of the saved is the renewed earth after the coming of Christ. The temporary abode is heaven before that event.

- The final state of the unsaved is to be cast into the lake of fire. Hell is the temporary abode until that event.
- All humanity will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The saved will receive their reward and the lost their sentence of eternal condemnation.

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## SUPPLEMENTAL READING

### [Debate on Apologetics](#): Evidentialism versus Presuppositionalism

#### **Evidentialism**

This view affirms that rational evidence exists to prove the existence of God. This is sometimes called *classical apologetics*, because most of these evidences were developed during past ages with some early church fathers and medieval scholars like Anselm and Aquinas.

Fundamental to this approach is a supposition about the ability of human reason. It is assumed that the human ability to reason has not been damaged by the fall to the degree that it is impossible for man to deduce the existence of God. Without this assumption, any expression of evidentialism lacks substance.

This point can be difficult for Reformed theologians to accept because classic Reformed theology claims that man is incapable of any spiritual good that may accompany salvation.<sup>19</sup> To affirm evidentialism, one must accept that the human faculty of reason has not fallen at all, except to become subservient to sin and thus be used for self-justification.

Therefore, man can reason very well from the evidence of creation to the knowledge of the existence of God. But because man is predisposed toward sin, he refuses to follow the evidence to its logical conclusion. The problem then is not with his ability to reason but with his will.

Evidentialists point out is that mankind is not insane. If the faculty of reasoning were fallen in the same sense as other human faculties, then people would be unable to apply the laws of logic, at all, in any domain. Therefore, the capacity of reasoning has not fallen in the sense of inability to apply the laws of logic, even to spiritual matters. What has fallen is his will to do so, prompted by his carnal nature.<sup>20</sup>

The majority of evidentialists do not affirm, therefore, that man has the ability to come to God in repentance by his unaided reason. Sufficient evidence exists to show there is a God and what kind of God there must be. Man perceives it very well and suppress the evidence to maintain his sinful autonomy. For the evidentialist, therefore, the first indictment of fallen man is based on man's knowledge, not his ignorance.

The main evidence to support evidentialism is Romans 1:18-22.

Evidentialists start with creation, including humanity itself, as the starting point. Critics of say that in doing exalts reason above the Scriptures and leaves man autonomous in his pride as the central point of reality. Evidentialists reply that this is circular reasoning because one must use his or reason to accept the Scriptures in the first place.

The point made is that it is not sinful autonomy to start with our own reason because we cannot start anywhere else. Sinful autonomy enters in the moment our reason leads to the need of submission to a divine authority and the person rebels against that. The problem is the will not the reason.

### **Two branches of evidentialism**

The *natural school* emphasizes the philosophical arguments based on creation. This includes both the cosmological and teleological arguments.

The *religious school* tends to emphasize such proofs as fulfillment of prophecy, miracles and the person of Jesus Christ.

Historically, Reformed theologians such as Calvin and Augustine, have supported a mixture of these two schools. They assume that sufficient evidence exists to prove God but are also quick to affirm that no amount of evidence could convert a person because of the bondage of sin. A regenerating work of the Holy Spirit is necessary for a person to respond correctly.

## **Presuppositionalism**

This approach to apologetics, invented in the last century by Reformed theologian Cornelius Van Til, claims the existence of God is cannot be determined by rational proofs and must be accepted by faith as an *a priori* presupposition. Only after accepting the existence of God by faith does the believer experience evidences of God's existence.

Presuppositionalists insist that this approach is the only one that does not start with the autonomy of man. They feel that any approach that starts with human reason is fundamentally corrupt and will lead, eventually, to a further sinful autonomy. Thus, the only way to avoid such autonomy is to begin *without* autonomy, that is, the presupposition that God exists.

Since God is the ultimate reality, the grounds of all other existence, it is an error to begin reasoning on any other basis than the presupposition of his existence.

Many conservative theologians, including some Reformed, support presuppositionalism. Many of these feel this is the only righteous approach to apologetics and disdain evidentialists as leaning toward liberalism or at least lacking in piety in their way of thinking.

### **Problems with presuppositionalism**

Critics have pointed out several devastating weakness in presuppositionalism. Among these are respected Reformed theologians such as R.C. Sproul, John Gerstner, Gordon Clark and others who have presented lethal arguments that presuppositionalists have been unable to refute. Following are some of these arguments:

1. The most serious problem with presuppositionalism is an apparent disregard of Romans 1:18-20. The apostle Paul argued for human accountability on the basis

of evidence inherent in the creation. Van Til agreed that the evidences for God exist in nature but that fallen man is incapable of perceiving it. To this it may be replied, How can a person suppress what they do not perceive?

2. Presuppositionalism embodies a self-contradictory premise. The word *apologetic* refers to the defense of a position taken. But a presupposition, by definition, is a viewpoint taken previously to the evidence. As Dr. Gordon Clark said to Van Til one day, "I will be happy to listen to a defense of your position, as long as you do not give any good reason for it!"

Dr. Clark was saying implying that the moment a presuppositionalist gives evidence for his position, he stops being a presuppositionalist and becomes an evidentialist. To date, presuppositionalist have not found a way to escape this dilemma.

3. Another way to expose this dilemma is to ask the presuppositionalist why they presuppose the existence of the Christian God and not some other deity. Invariably, they refer to evidences of his existence in nature. However, this amounts to stealing proofs from the evidentialist camp to support the presuppositionalist.
4. Critics point out the circular reasoning in presupposing the existence of God to prove the existence of God.
5. Critics also point out that presuppositionalists accuse others of what they themselves are doing, that is, using human reason as a starting point. We have to start with our own mind, no matter what approach we take. Even if we choose to start with the presupposition of God's existence, it is nevertheless own mind that makes the decision to do that. If we do so, it is because we have reasons in mind for doing it. If then we choose presuppositionalism over evidentialism, it is because we have used our reason to do so.

Therefore, the presuppositionalist starts with the same autonomy as the evidentialist, whether he admits it or not.

6. The evidentialist claims it is not sinful to start from a position of autonomous reason because there is no other way to start. When we wake up in the morning, we start in our own minds, not our neighbor's or God's. This is not sinful. It becomes sinful when we face evidence of God's existence and refuse to yield to it.

Recommended readings:

- The best refutation of presuppositional apologetics is found in **CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS** by Sproul, Gerstner and Lindsey.
- A book designed to teach laymen how to defend the faith in simple terms biblically, without philosophical elaborations is Smalling's, [Creation, Conscience and Christ](#).

See [Free Books](#) on Smalling's website

If you enjoyed this manual, you will like [Unlocking Grace](#) by Smalling

## Foreknowledge: Does it explain election?

Some believe that election may be explained on the basis of divine foreknowledge. This means they assume God chooses people because he knows in advance who will accept Christ.

The supposition that the doctrine of predestination is refuted by the foreknowledge concept is without biblical defense for the following reasons:

- The word *foreknowledge*, when used regarding divine decisions, always means “foreordained.”

Examples: The coming of Christ, [Acts 2:23](#); the people of Israel regardless of disobedience, [Romans 11:2](#).

- The concept of election by foreknowledge does not tempt a person to charge God with injustice. Any doctrine that fails to do this, contradicts [Romans 9:18-20](#). According to this text, the doctrine of election causes people to question the justice of God. Paradoxically, therefore, any doctrine that explains election to the satisfaction of man’s sense of justice, is false.
- Election based on foreknowledge, makes a person elect himself rather than be elect of God. This is circular reasoning and is not election by God at all. Election means chosen by God, not chosen by oneself. See [1 Thessalonians 1:4](#), [Colossians 3:12](#) and [Titus 1:1](#).
- Election by foreknowledge presupposes that the sinner is capable of accepting Christ and submitting to God by an act of his free will whenever he happens to wish. See [John 6:44](#); [Romans 8:7](#), [R](#)
- [:16](#).
- The concept of foreknowledge assumes God cannot overcome the limitations of man’s will. See Daniel 4:28-35, [Proverbs 21:1](#).
- Foreknowledge assumes that God’s divine decrees and counsels can be resisted by man. See [Isaiah 46:10](#), [Proverbs 19:21](#).

## [Analysis of 2 Peter 3:9](#)

### Does this text teach a divine intention to save everyone?

*The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

Placed back into context,, this verse constitutes an excellent evidence for the doctrine of election. We need only ask two questions for this to become clear.

#### **First, to whom is Peter speaking?**

*But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 2 Peter 3:8*

Who are the *beloved*? A concordance reveals that this term is used exclusively in connection with the elect. An example is Colossians 3:12,

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,*

It is believers only that are God's beloved, not all humanity.

#### **Second, what is Peter taking about?**

The word *promise* in verse 9 explains why Peter is concerned that we should have God's perspective of time. He draws our attention to the divine promise that seems to be delayed in its fulfillment. What would that be? Verse 10 answers,

*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief,...*

Peter is exhorting believers who are worried about the delay in the return of Christ. He reminds them that God is more patient than we are. His patience has a strong motivation. The church, the body of Christ, is incomplete. What the last member has been added, Christ will return.

Moreover, there exists serious defect in the logic employed with the intent of using 2 Peter 3:8 to refute election. If God did not want anyone to perish, why does he not send Christ immediately? Five million new human beings are born daily. Statistically speaking, the majority will perish without Christ.

Has God forgotten the math involved in the geometric progression of the population? Something is wrong with that scenario.

Let's take a look at 2 Peter 3:9, with some interpretive clarifications put in, to see if the verse makes more sense relative the context and common logic.

*The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise [OF THE SECOND COMING] as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, [THE ELECT] not wishing that any [OF*

*THE ELECT] should perish, but that all [THE ELECT] should reach repentance.*

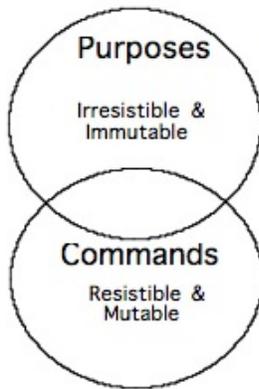
## **Conclusion**

Putting 2 Peter 3:9 back into context with sound logic, reveals it supports the Reformed doctrine of sovereign election.

## Distinctions in the will of God

**Purpose:** Show the difference between the will of God in his moral commands versus his will as to his eternal purposes. This lesson is essential to understand the lesson on eternal decrees.

The following is an extract from *Unlocking Grace* by Roger Smalling:



God expressed his will of commands as moral edicts, such as the Ten Commandments. God allows people to transgress these laws, and man sins in doing so. But when God decrees that he will fulfill a certain purpose, he allows no one to invalidate or hinder that it.

Example: Suppose God said, “Do you see that tree? I command that no one should cut it down.” This would be a divine injunction, the expression of his will of commands. Would God permit someone to cut the tree down? Yes, because God allows his commands to be broken.

Suppose, though, God said, “My sovereign purpose is that this tree never be cut down.” Would God allow someone to cut it down? No power on earth, human or demonic, could cut down that tree. God would prevent it.

Were it not for his will of commands, man would not be allowed to sin. Without his will of purpose, we would lack the confidence that God could fulfill his promises.

Theological disaster results from ignoring the difference between these two aspects of God’s will.

So, his will of command can be resisted. God himself may choose to change to his commands. Not only does he allow his commands to be broken, he may even annul them. The Old Testament ceremonial laws, for example, are no longer binding.

Not so with immutable decrees. These never change, and no one stops him from accomplishing them. This idea is sometimes expressed in Scripture as his *counsels*.

*My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose, Isaiah 46:10*

Other times, the word *purpose* expresses the same thought.

*So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, Hebrews 6:17*

*... according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of*

*his will. Ephesians 1:11*

*For the Lord of Hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back? Isaiah 14:27*

Some texts may not use these terms, but the idea comes across unmistakably.

*...and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?" Daniel 4:35*

Through the concept of immutability, we see more clearly what is meant by the phrase *sovereignty of God*. We have more than solid grounds for trusting him.

### **From lesson we learn...**

- God's commands to mankind to obey are resistible and mutable. He allows them to be broken.
- God's decree of purposes are irresistible and immutable.

## Analysis of Romans 5:18

*Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.*

Wesleyan Arminianism claims the death of Christ bought for all men the offer of justification. The phrase *all men* is said to mean that all have been granted a degree of life. Just as all were condemned in Adam, so all have been offered justification.

The weaknesses of this interpretation are:

- Justification has never been offered to all because justification is not an offer. It is a decree. As a legal term, it never carries the idea of an offer. Example: A judge does not “offer” an acquittal to a suspect. He simply decrees the accused to be innocent.
- Likewise, justification does not mean “be made righteous,” as is supposed by the interpretation offered, as though God were offering to make people righteous. *Justification* means “declare righteous,” or “be vindicate.” This is an absolute.

The context of the verse refutes the Arminian interpretation:

- The previous verse, (verse 17), shows the same distinction between those counted as the descendants of Adam versus those counted as the descendants of Christ. In the first part, *all* were made sinners. In the second part, *many* (the believers) will be justified.
- The first half of the chapter is a discourse to Christians on the benefits of justification. In no place does the Bible refer to justification apart from believers. The first person plural (“we” and “us”) is used throughout the epistle. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that wherever Paul speaks of justification, he has believers in mind, not unbelievers.

Proponents of the Arminian interpretation of verse 18 insist that it is inappropriate to attribute two different meanings to the same clause in the same verse. They maintain it is strange that those who propose the doctrine in question, object to the idea of a word inversion in verse 17. The phrase *all men* occurs twice in the verse; condemnation for *all men* by Adam but life for *all men* by Jesus Christ. They suppose that the extent of the one should apply to the other.

This, however, proves more than intended because that would mean universal salvation, which Arminians do not affirm. The context of the book of Romans shows Paul must have assumed we would understand that the work of Christ extends to all believers, regardless of ethnicity, Jew or gentile. Although the corruption of Adam extends to all

human beings, Jew and gentile alike, so the righteousness of Christ extends to all people, Jew and gentile alike, assuming they believe.

The previous verse sets the tone for this limitation of the second *all men* in verse 17:

*For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.*

Notice the interpretation inversion in the use of the phrase *one man* here. Death reigned on everyone by one man, Adam. That effect is unlimited. But life reigns by one man, Christ, on all those *who receive the abundance of grace*. That effect is limited to only those who receive grace, not all men. It is with this in mind that we read verse 18 and the Arminian interpretation falls apart.

It is worth noting that the phrase *all men* in the Bible normally means *people of various kinds*, not “everybody who has ever lived.”

The interpretation assumes a distinction between imputed guilt and personal guilt.

The central point of Paul's discourse in Romans 5 is that the guilt of Adam is our guilt. The entire point in the context is that whatever is attributed by imputation is personally ours. It makes no sense to impute guilt unless it is counted as personal.

Likewise, if that guilt is personally ours, then it is counted to us as chosen. However bizarre this may appear, it is the logical consequence of imputed guilt. This means that the inability of man to desire and do what is right is a chosen inability. Therefore, no one is free to construct arguments to insinuate that God owes an “opportunity” to anyone.

It is improper to affirm that people deserve a special gift of free will on the grounds that the sin of Adam was not personally chosen.

Just as the imputed sin of Adam is counted as our own personal and chosen guilt, although we did nothing personally to cause it, so the righteousness of Christ is counted as ours, although we did nothing to earn it.

This is the entire force of Paul's argument in Romans 4 and 5. Ironically, therefore, Romans 5:18, taken in context, supports rather than refutes, the doctrine of effectual call.

## **Conclusion**

The proposed interpretation of Romans 5:18 adds the concept of *offer* where it does not exist. This ignores the grammar structure and attributes to the term *justification*: a meaning it does not carry. It supposes a distinction between imputed guilt and personal guilt which is not only self-contradictory but contradicts the principle point of the chapter.

The interpretation insists there can be no limitation of meanings of the same phrase in the same verse, without taking into account the limitation imposed by the previous verse.

We are forced to the conclusion that Romans 5:18 provides no support for the theory that the sacrifice of Christ justified all humanity from the sin of Adam.

## [On 2Corinthians 5:14-20](#) and Limited Atonement

An Arminian interpretation intended to refute limited atonement

*For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. 16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

**The Arminian interpretation offered for this text is as follows:**

- Christ died for all those who died in Adam, which is to say, all humanity.
- The sacrifice of Christ reconciled the world to God and bought the possibility of reconciliation for everyone who desires to be reconciled.
- God is now in Christ, pleading with the world that it should accept his offer of reconciliation.

**The weaknesses in this interpretation**

The interpretation give says more than the Arminian intends. In verse 19, Paul clarifies what he meant in the previous verses. He starts by saying *that is*, which is equivalent to *by this I meant*. He then says that God reconciled the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. This would prove to much because it would imply universal salvation, a doctrine Arminians rightly reject.

Therefore, the Arminians must accept a limitation regarding those for whom Christ died or else affirm universal salvation.

This text does not teach Christ died for all those who died in Adam. It teaches the same thing found in Romans 6, that all who are in Christ have died to sin and to their own ego and now live for God. This is proven by the following considerations:

- Paul does not say that Christ died for all those who had been dead spiritually. That would mean all humanity. He simply says that all those for whom Christ died also were dead, that is, in no better state than anyone else.

- The kind of death that “those” died is clear from the context: Those who live, no longer live for themselves but for the one who died and resurrected for them.
- The word *all* in verse 14 has the article “the” before it and literally says “the all.” This grammatical construction in Greek normally carries the idea of a limitation and therefore does not include all humanity. It means something like “all these,” which suggests a group of people among humanity at large.

### **Examination of the key phrase, “not counting their trespasses against them.”**

This text says the sins of the world are not counted against them. If the term *world* must mean “all humanity,” then it follows that nobody can be lost because their sins are not counted against them.

This cannot be the case because the wrath of God is the unregenerate. Why wrath if no guilt is attributed?

Nothing in the text suggests an “offer” to not take their sins into account. Imputation is an absolute throughout the rest of Scripture.

The word “world” is often used in Scripture in the sense of non-Jews. An example is Romans 11:15,

*For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?*

Every text in the New Testament dealing with reconciliation is always presented as a provision for believers only, not all humanity.

The evident meaning of 2 Corinthians 5:14-19 is that God was in Christ, reconciling believers to himself throughout the world, gentiles included.

### **Conclusion**

The text grants no support to a doctrine of universal atonement, universal salvation or a provision of common grace.

## Common logic fallacies regarding free will

### Fallacy one

#### **God would not command us to do what we cannot perform.**

God gave the Law to Moses, the Ten Commandments, to reveal what man *cannot* do, not what he *can* do without God and without grace.

The Law of Moses exposes sin to increase it so man would have no excuse for declaring his own righteousness. Romans Chapter Three declares that man does *no* righteousness.

Martin Luther said to Erasmus, “when you are finished with all your commands and exhortations from the Old Testament, I’ll write Romans 3:19-20 over the top of it all.”<sup>21</sup> Why refer to commands and exhortations from the Old Testament to prove free will when they were given to show man’s sinful inability to fulfill them?

God’s commands reveal what we *cannot* do rather than what we *can* do. Yes, God gave commands that mankind cannot obey. Therefore commandments and exhortations do not prove man’s ability or *free will*. The Arminian assumption that a command to do a thing proves the ability to do it, is unscriptural.

There may be various reasons for commanding someone to do something. The purpose could be to show someone his *inability* to perform the command. This would underscore for that person his very need of help. From a mere command, therefore, *nothing* can be deduced about free will or human ability.

### Fallacy two

#### **If not free, then not responsible**

Arminians assume if we are unable to make a choice to the contrary, then our wills are not free. This is irrational because it assumes there is such a thing as moral neutrality.

The entire idea of neutrality of will is absurd. If the person’s *nature* does not determine the decisions of the will, in what sense do such decisions represent the person himself? How could be a decision be a truly moral one if it is morally neutral? Can morality be morality at all and be neutral?

According to Scripture, freedom is described as holiness. The *ultimate* freedom is *absolute* holiness. If that is true, then God is the most *free* being in the universe. Otherwise, we must say God is the most *enslaved* being in the universe because he is the one least neutral on moral issues.

Likewise, if we assume that bondage of will eliminates responsibility, then the best way to avoid responsibility for our sins to be as bound by them as much as possible. The drunk bound by alcoholism is therefore not responsible for his actions. Should we encourage people to sin more, so they are no longer responsible?

## Fallacy three

### **For love to be real, it must have the possibility of being rejected**

We often hear that God wants us to love him freely, not by compulsion. He is a gentleman and will not impose himself on anyone. They conclude that fallen man must have the *ability* to love God. He simply *chooses* to love other things.

Scripture teaches love for God is a product of His grace. (1Timothy 1:14) If grace is necessary to make us love God, it follows we were unable to love him before grace came. It also shows that grace is not given because we chose to love God. Grace takes the initiative. We chose to love God because grace is given, not because of a virtue or ability foreseen in man.

This premise is similar to fallacy one, that God would not command what we cannot perform. Does God give the saints in heaven an opportunity to hate him so to be fair? Did Jesus have some ability to hate the Father? Or was His love for the Father a reflection of what He really is?

Since faith is a gift of grace, should it be strange to think love must be also a gift of grace?

## Fallacy four

### **A person cannot be responsible or punished for what he cannot help**

If this is the case, a Christian may not be rewarded for what his new nature, through the fruit of the Spirit, *compels* him to do. The nature of a person is not a thing he *possesses*. It is something he *is*.

Smalling's books are available for [KINDLE](#)

## Nicene Creed, Council of Nicea, 325 A.D.

### MODERN WORDING

(The Interdenominational Committee on Liturgical Texts)

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven:  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father [and the Son].  
With the Father and the Son  
he is worshipped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the Prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. AMEN.

## Cessationism versus Continuationism

### **Cessationism**

The view that certain spiritual gifts mentioned in the epistles disappeared from the church after the death of the apostles; or, disappeared after the canon of Scripture was completed. These gifts, called sign gifts or revelatory gifts are prophecy, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, miracles, gifts of healings, tongues and interpretation of tongues. These are sometimes called *charismata*, the Greek word for spiritual gifts.

Cessationism is the view held most widely by the Reformed branch of theology along with Baptists and some Arminian denominations such as Nazarenes.

### **Main cessationist arguments**

#### **Apostolic authentication**

The purpose of signs and wonders performed by the apostles was to authenticate their ministry for the establishment of the Christian movement. Once that was accomplished, miracles were no longer necessary.

#### **Sufficiency of Scripture**

The word of God is fully sufficient for the growth of the church and therefore nothing else is needed. The Bible is a sufficient sign from God in and of itself.

#### **Revelation**

Scripture is the final and authoritative revelation from God. Therefore, no further revelations are necessary and if any existed, they ought to be canonized.

To support this, cessationists appeal to [1 Timothy 3:16](#); [1 Corinthians 13:8-10](#).

### **Continuationism**

The view that all the spiritual gifts mentioned in the epistles continue in the church today if Christians wish to have and practice them.

### **Main continuationist arguments**

Continuationists insist that no burden of proof rests on them to prove anything because spiritual gifts are taught in the epistles and nowhere is there a hint they would end with the apostles or with the canonization of Scripture.

The cessation of spiritual gifts, the continuationists argue, would be such a monumental event that it would be predicted by the apostles since they predicted many other things, such as the fate of the churches in Revelation 1-3. Therefore, the continuationist line of argumentation consists in refuting the cessationist arguments as follows:

#### **Apostolic authentication**

Nowhere does the Bible say that the purpose of miracles were to authenticate apostles. Others. Like Stephen and Philip did miracles and they were not apostles. Miracles authenticated the gospel of grace, not any person, according to [Acts 14:3](#). No reason exists as to why the gospel does not need authentication today.

### **Sufficiency of Scripture**

The cessationist argument embodies a fallacy of definitions. If the Scriptures are sufficient in and of themselves so that spiritual gifts are unnecessary, then it must follow that the Lord's supper and baptism are unnecessary also, along with fellowship, church attendance, singing and other practices the Bible commands. The Bible is not like a novel, is sufficient in and of itself for the purpose of entertainment. It is a manual with instructions on things Christians are to practice for their growth and that of the church. Those things including spiritual gifts.

### **Revelation**

Another fallacy of definitions. The term "revelation" can indeed refer to final apostolic authority and is used that way in Scripture. It is also used in the secondary sense of an impulse of the Holy Spirit for a Christian to apply edification, exhortation and comfort to fellow believers and is plainly non-authoritative. See [1 Corinthians 14:3, 29](#).

### **Signs and wonders versus charismata**

Some continuationists distinguish between the miracles performed by the apostles in the Book of Acts from the spiritual gifts in the epistles. The term "signs and wonders" is never applied to the *charismata* mentioned in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. Likewise, the term *charismata* is not found in the Book of Acts. The signs and wonders of the apostles, it is said, differed in frequency, intensity and immediate purpose. The apostolic ministries established the body of Christ in the world. The spiritual gifts were given to the church for its continuation and growth.

This is a modified form of continuationism.

### **Fear of Pentecostalism**

Most continuationists today are Pentecostals or charismatics. These generally hold no distinction between apostolic signs and wonder versus spiritual gifts in the church.

Modified continuationists insist that the real basis for cessationist arguments is fear of Pentecostal abuses, false manifestations or division. Continuationists insist these reasons are insufficient for abandoning scriptural injunctions to pursue spiritual gifts.

## On the ordination of women

The question of women's ordination boils down to the difference between *creation* and *culture*.

Those who hold to the ordination of women to ecclesiastical office, point out that women are equal to men. From this they assume that excluding them from ministerial office is based on outmoded cultural norms of the past. This view is called *egalitarianism*.

Since women today have competed successfully with men in such domains as business and politics, egalitarians see no reason for excluding them from leadership within the church. Refusing them, it is argued, is simply discrimination, based on bygone prejudice.

Those who reserve ordination solely for men, base their thinking on God's purposes in creation before cultures existed. This view is called *complimentarianism* because they say the woman was created to compliment man in his created purpose, that of caretaker of the earth for God's glory.

### **The burden of proof**

To overthrow 3500 years of Jewish and Christian practice, egalitarians must show from the biblical text itself that the reason for excluding women from authority in the church was cultural. Merely affirming it was cultural, is not proof. Accusing complimentarians of chauvinism or prejudice is not proof either.

If even one scripture places the exclusion of women from ecclesiastic office on other grounds than culture, then egalitarianism stands refuted. Though one text would suffice, there are many.

In the study below, we will see the apostles were well aware of cultural considerations but ignored them in favor of issues going back to creation before cultures existed.

### **Does male headship in the household extend to the church?**

Male headship in the household is clearly established in Genesis before the existence of cultures. Both complimentarians and egalitarians recognize this.

*Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Gen. 2:18*

From this, we see that woman was created for two purposes: As a companion to the man and as his helper. This establishes the question of authority.

Though egalitarians agree with this point, they argue that the home and the church are separate institutions.

Are they separate? Or, does the male headship in the household carry over to the church? Let's see what Paul says:

*Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. 11 I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. 12 For Adam was formed first, then Eve; 13 and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor 14 Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. 1Tim.2:11-15*

Paul immediately resorts to an argument from creation to justify two prohibitions: Women may not teach men in the church nor exercise authority over them.

The reason given is that Adam was created first. This allowed Adam the right to *exercise authority*. Does Paul claim this referred only to the household? He is using the creation of Adam to justify a policy in the church. This predates cultures.

Moreover, Paul implies that putting women in a place of authority may open them to demonic deception. The church may be exposing them to the same kind of temptation that Eve faced. Paul's intent, therefore, is not to be discriminatory but protective.

The last verse puzzled me until I saw the protective element in it. The clause *saved through childbearing* does not mean childbearing has saving value nor is this a moral obligation on all women to have children. He simply means the primary role of women is husbands and children. If we put them into roles for which they were not created, we subject them to pressures they were not intended to handle. It is the man's job to deal with snakes in the garden.

Again, the context shows the ordination question is a creation issue, not cultural. Times may change, but God's purposes in creation do not.

Another key text is 1Cor.11:3-16. In this chapter, Paul answers a question about the local Corinthian custom of head covering for women. Though he clarifies that the other churches have no such custom, nevertheless he approves of the practice insofar as the Corinthians intend to express the submission of the women to church authority, which in turn is based on creation purposes.

It is difficult to see how egalitarians can find any other intent in this text than the establishment of male authority in the church.

Egalitarians sometimes argue that both men and women are the image of God and therefore must have the same value. From that, they assume women must be entitled to the same functions and offices in the church. The illogic of this is plain enough without scripture but Paul uses the *image of God* idea to make his point. This in turn refutes the egalitarian position.

**First point: Precedence in the home**

*But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. 1Cor.11:3*

Paul starts his argument from a simple hierarchy that incorporates the whole of creation. God, Christ, husband, wife. He implies it would be just as absurd for the wife to take authority over her husband as for the husband to have authority over Christ or Christ over God the Father.

More importantly, he uses the home as groundwork for authority in the church. In the apostolic tradition, the home and the church are different institutions but by no means separate. This explains why Paul moves his argument smoothly from the home and applies it to the church. This puts the egalitarian in an uncomfortable position for he must show that the two institutions are entirely separate, contrary to the text.

**Second point: The precedence of image**

*For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. V.7*

Man is the image of God. Woman is the image of the man. That is why she is the image of God. His image was derived directly from God; hers indirectly, via the man.

**Third point: Creation order**

*For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. 1Cor.11:8*

Paul implies that God intends the man to be in authority on the grounds that he made him first.

**Fourth point: Creation purpose**

*Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 1Cor. 11:9*

God created the man as caretaker of creation and the woman as his helper. This establishes authority by the difference of *purpose* in the creation of the two genders.

Paul shows he understands that authority is established by this creation purpose with the words, “*That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head...*”

Does this mean women today should have a veil on their head, as in some eastern cultures? No. Paul commends the Corinthians for applying a local custom to express a biblical truth, although that particular form of cultural expression is not applicable universally. A woman’s hair suffices for covering, if someone is concerned about that question.

Paul shows he was keenly aware of cultural issues but allows no grounds for the authority of women in the church, even on the basis of culture, image of God, giftedness nor anything else.

**Interdependence**

*Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; 11 for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. 1Cor.11:11-12*

It is a grave mistake for a man to assume that because he is in authority in the home or the church, that he has a right to an independent attitude toward women. That attitude is a product of pride, not logic and certainly not justified by any creation purpose. A Christian leader who disregards the women in the church or home is headed for trouble, not only with them but also with God.

Woman was created to compliment man. Though she is not to lead him, he may not walk all over her either.

### **The question of spiritual gifts and competence**

Egalitarians sometimes argue on the grounds that women may have any spiritual gift and therefore are entitled to equal authority. Children can have spiritual gifts too. What does this have to do with creation purposes?

What about competence? The issue in ordination is not competence but call.

*And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, Heb.5:4*

It does not necessarily follow that God calls individuals because they are the most competent people around. His call is based on his own sovereign will and grace. This has nothing to do with creation purposes regarding genders.

### **From this we learn...**

- Egalitarians base their view on three considerations: Culture, image of God and equality of competence. The apostolic teaching as to God's purposes in creating the two genders, slices through all three egalitarian arguments and exposes them as irrelevant.
- The two texts we discussed, 1Cor.11 and 1Tim.2, are adequate for addressing all egalitarian arguments, although other scriptures exist as well.
- Woman was made to compliment man and be his helper. This establishes the headship of man in the home. The question is whether this extends to the church. The Bible answers this with a resounding yes.
- Though women are also the image of God, equally valuable as his children, they may not exercise authority in the church over men, nor teach them. This is not intended to be discriminatory but protective.

## Ordination of women to the office of deaconess

Minor theological issues typically contain evidences for both sides. In some cases, like the issue of deaconesses, evidence is scanty for either view. Despite this, proper hermeneutics urges us to consider all the evidence to determine where the greater weight lies, although the totality of evidence may be small. The intent of this brief study is to demonstrate that the view generally held by Reformed churches is the one with greatest amount of evidence.

### **The case of Phoebe: Titles and functions**

*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. Romans 16:1 (ESV)*

The word *servant* here translates the Greek noun *diakonos*, from which the name *deacon* is derived. This presents a complication regarding the *office* of deacon. The Bible sometimes uses this word without reference to any office as a description of an service performed. Deacons are servants, but not all who serve are *deacons*. It is, after all, quite normal for Christians to serve without holding an office.

It is sometimes necessary to distinguish between the *title* and the *function* when a term is used. When the term *diakonos* is applied to a person, how do we tell if it is the office of deacon or simply a work of Christian service, without a title? Usually the context tells us:

*But as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: 2Corinthians 6:4*

Paul applies *diakonos* to himself in this verse. In this case, does the word describe an office, or a function? Paul was an apostle, not a deacon. At no time do we read he received ordination to the office of deacon. Nor do we see him performing diaconal functions in any local church. In this context, it refers to his apostolic function as a minister to the gentiles. The usage here is therefore *functional*, with no reference to an office.

The scriptures normally use *diakonos* in this *functional* sense without reference to the biblical office of deacon. Examples:

- A servant attitude that should typify leaders, Matthew 20:26; Mark 9:35.
- Of public officials such as policemen and government leaders. These are not officers in the church, Romans 13:4.
- Of Christ Himself, who surely did not receive ordination to the office of deacon in the local church, Galatians 2:17.
- Of an apostolic team sent by Paul to deal with affairs in the local church, Ephesians 6:21.

- Of a church-planter, the founder of the church in Colossae, Colossians 1:7.

These texts demonstrate *diakonos* is normally functional and only rarely limited to the definition of a local church office. When it refers to an office, the context makes it clear that meaning is intended as in First Timothy 3 where offices are the subject of the chapter. In other contexts, where church offices are not the subject, the ordinary usage must be assumed, according to the standard rule of hermeneutics.

### **Why the example of Phoebe is not evidence**

To use Phoebe to prove the existence of women deacons in the early church, one must demonstrate that *diakonos* is used for her title as well as a ministry function. Is there such evidence?

No. Absolutely nothing in the context indicates Phoebe held the office of deaconess. It could easily be a description of an activity she performed, regardless of title. To assume Phoebe was ordained to the office of deaconess merely because the word *diakonos* is applied to her, would require supposing the same of the apostle Paul.

Nothing in the context where Phoebe is mentioned refers to church offices. Therefore it should be assumed that use of the word *diakonos* in Romans 16:1 is the usual definition referring to a service being performed. This verse therefore constitutes no evidence for the existence of women in the office of deacon in the early church.

### **Argument from authority**

It has been argued that the office of deacon contains no leadership authority. Correct. However, this does not mean it contains no authority whatsoever. Although this office is in submission to that of the elders, it still has authority within the domain of its service.

The idea of an office without authority is absurd. The very concept of office implies authority of some kind, however limited. To ordain a woman to an office is therefore to establish her in a position of authority, contrary to Paul's description of the role of women as non-authoritative in church as he explains elsewhere

### **Argument from *husband* in 1 Timothy 3**

The pattern regarding deacons seems to be similar to that of elders. Elders are to be husbands of one wife. Thus, the role refers solely to the male gender. The text then likens this role to deacons: *Likewise... verse 8*.

Arguments exist to circumvent this but seem coerced. It would be reasonable to take the text in its most obvious sense, that the male gender occupies all ordained offices.

### **Argument from history**

The Bible, not tradition, is the final arbitrator of truth. That is what the Reformed movement is all about. Yet the reformers did not throw out traditions merely because they were traditions, but only when they felt compelled to do so because of Scripture.

For four hundred years the Reformed movement has ordained men only for the reasons above. If this is wrong, then it must be changed. The burden of proof resides with those who disagree.

Smalling's books and essays are available at: [www.smallings.com](http://www.smallings.com)

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/891496>

<sup>2</sup> Italian bishop, d.1074, who elaborated a series of arguments on the existence of God.

<sup>3</sup> German philosopher, d.1724.

<sup>4</sup> The best description I have found of this ebb and flow is **TWENTIETH CENTURY THEOLOGY** by *Stanly and Olson*.

<sup>5</sup> Charnock, Stephen: **EXISTENCE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD**. Baker Books, 1996, Grand Rapids, MI

<sup>6</sup> A view taught by Sabellius, a heretic in Egypt around 215 A.D.

<sup>7</sup> Probably not written by Athanasius himself but named in his honor because he fought for the doctrine in his time.

<sup>8</sup> Aquinas, Thomas. **SUMMA DE SUMMA** (a summary of his **SUMMA THEOLOGICA**.)

<sup>9</sup> The word is Greek and means belly button. It is a takeoff on the old question, Did Adam have a belly button? The answer would be that God would have created him as though he had a natural birth.

<sup>10</sup> Heard in various Christian broadcasts.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis, C.S. *Miracles*, London: G. Bles Publishers 1960

<sup>12</sup> Trench, Richard. **SYNONYMS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 1980. P.241

<sup>13</sup> Excluding, of course, periods of severe persecution.

<sup>14</sup> The name *docetism* is taken from the Greek word *doceo*= to seem.

<sup>15</sup> Nestorius was Bishop of Constantinople, died 450. His views were condemned at the Council of Ephesus, AD 431. He taught that Christ was two persons in one body and therefore two personalities.

<sup>16</sup> The view that the physical body of Christ is present in, around and through the elements of the Lord's Supper. This view was invented by Luther but rejected by other branches of the Reformed movement.

<sup>17</sup> McClellan, H. **THE ORIGIN OF THE RAPTURE AND TRIBULATION THEORY**. Rosedog books, 2007

<sup>18</sup> **MOUNCE GREEK DICTIONARY-** G4955.

<sup>19</sup> See WCF 9-3

<sup>20</sup> This seems to be the view held by Aquinas.

<sup>21</sup> Luther, Martin. **BONDAGE OF THE WILL**.