



WHY DO WE BELIEVE *THAT* ?

Introduction to Reformed Theology

Class 11

DOCTRINE OF MAN

Education Year 2024-2025

Rev. Mark H. Vander Pol



1

Review – Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

- Answering Objections to Common Grace
- How to Defend Doctrines
 - Properly Understand Opponent and their Position
 - Beware of Slippery Slope Arguments
 - Don't Attack a Strawman
- Doctrine of the Holy Spirit
 - Cessationism



2

Creation

- Not going to spend a lot of time answering objections to the Biblical Doctrine of Creation.
 - Many, many accessible resources with a great understanding of the science.
- Some views/understanding within confessional Reformed & Presbyterian circles
 - **Ordinary Days** – The six days of creation are “ordinary” 24-hour days.
 - **Analogical View** – The six days of creation are not necessarily identical to our days (but they can be), rather they set a structured pattern of periods of God’s working and the intent is to communicate the 6+1 pattern of the week and set up covenantal relations in the beginning of Genesis.
 - **Framework View** – The days are presented as normal solar days within a figurative week.
 - First Three Days – Kingdoms; Second Three Days - Kings
 - **Day-Age View** – The days of creation aren’t 24-hour days but allows for longer periods of time.



What Must We Believe? – Synod 2001

Synod affirms that Scripture teaches, as summarized by the Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity:

- The authority and perspicuity of Scripture (BC 5; HC LD 7).
- Necessity and sufficiency of Scripture (BC 7; HC LD 7).
- God the Father almighty created the heavens and the earth and all things visible and invisible (Apostle’s and Nicene Creed).
- The Father created the heavens and the earth out of nothing (HC LD 9).
- God gave every creature its shape and being (BC 12).
- The creation and fall of man. “God made man of the dust of the earth; man gave ear to the devil.” (BC 14).
- The historicity of Adam (HC Q&A 20; CD 3/4.1).



What Must We Believe? – continued

Synod affirms that Scripture teaches, as summarized by the Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity:

- Man was created good, in a garden, and tempted by the devil, committed reckless disobedience (HC LD 3 & 4).
- God's words to the serpent in Paradise are noted as the first revelation of the Gospel (HC LD 6).
- Adam plunged himself and his offspring by his first transgression into perdition (BC 16).
- Adam's fall into sin and our connection to it (CD I.I).
- God came seeking man when he, trembling, fled from Him (BC 17).
- God created all things good in six days defined as evenings and mornings (Genesis 1 & 2 and Exodus 20:11). This means that we reject any evolutionary teaching, including theistic evolution, concerning the origin of the earth and of all creatures (HC LD 9).



Ex nihilo Creation

- God creates by divine fiat, creating without the use of pre-existent material.
 - Heb 11:3, "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible."
- Berkhof, "Creation in the strict sense of the word may be defined as that free act of God whereby He, according to His sovereign will and for His own glory, in the beginning brought forth the whole visible and invisible universe, without the use of pre-existent material, and thus gave it an existence, distinct from His own and yet always dependent on Him."¹

1. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 129.



Providence

- God continues to uphold, rule, and govern his creation (HC Q&As 26-27).
 - The same power by which God created, he upholds.
 - Concursus/Concurrence – God works directly with “secondary causes” – Joseph
 - Gen 50:20, “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”

Contrary

- Deism: God as a watchmaker who just wound it up and let it run.
 - “God of the Gaps” – whatever couldn’t / can’t be explained by science, it must have been God.



7

Angels

- DVD – “Don’t forget about the angels!”
- BC 12 – “He has also created the angels good, that they might be his messengers and serve his elect. Some of them have fallen...”
- WLC 16 – **How did God create angels?** Answer: God created all the angels spirits (*sic*), immortal, holy, excelling in knowledge, mighty in power, to execute his commandments, and to praise his name, yet subject to change.
- WLC 19 – **What is God's providence towards the angels?** Answer: God by his providence permitted some of the angels, wilfully and irrecoverably, to fall into sin and damnation, limiting and ordering that, and all their sins, to his own glory; and established the rest in holiness and happiness; employing them all, at his pleasure, in the administrations of his power, mercy, and justice.



8

Origin of Man

- Imperative that we believe the Bible speaks of an historical Adam who is made in God's image and likeness and to whom the Lord "breathed life into."
 - Murray, "And God said, Let us make man' (Gen. 1:26). These terms have no parallel elsewhere. The uniqueness does not reside in the fact that God spoke, but in what he said: 'Let us make.' The formula is not that of simple fiat as in the case of light (Gen. 1:3). Nor is it that of command in reference to existing entities—'let the earth bring forth tender herb' (Gen. 1:11); 'let the waters swarm swarm [Murray's translation] of living creature' (Gen. 1:20); 'let the earth bring forth living creature' (Gen. 1:24). The terms 'let us make' indicate that there is unique engagement of divine thought and counsel, and bespeak the fact that something correspondingly unique is about to take place."¹
 - Gen 2:7 is fundamentally different than the "life" of the "living creatures"—cannot be evolutionary, but we do have an affinity with the animals (we are made of the dust).

1. Murray, "The Origin of Man", 4.



Elements of Man

- "Monochotomy", Dichotomy or Trichotomy?
 - Body
 - Body and soul
 - Body, soul, and spirit
- "Monochotomy" – only a body, no soul.
 - Marxism
 - Modern psychology – everything is explained by the brain.
- Trichotomy – Body, soul, and spirit
 - Eastern Orthodoxy
 - Body – Lowest part
 - Soul – Intermediate part
 - Spirit – Highest part
 - 1 Thess 5:23 – Paul isn't making a trichotomist statement, but a statement concerning our whole being.



Dichotomy

- Berkhof, “This is in harmony with the self-consciousness of man, which clearly testifies to the fact that man consists of a material and a spiritual element. It is also borne out by the study of Scripture, which speaks of man as consisting of ‘body and soul,’ Matt. 6:25; 10:28, or of ‘body and spirit,’ Eccl. 12:7; I Cor. 5:3, 5. The two words, ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’ do not denote two different elements in man, but serve to distinguish the one spiritual substance of man. . . . These two terms merely serve to designate the spiritual element of man from two different points of view. The word ‘spirit’ contemplates it as the principle of life and action which controls the body; while the word ‘soul’ refers to it as the personal subject in man, which thinks and feels and wills, and in some cases particularly as the seat of affections, Gen. 2:7; Ps. 62:1; 63:1; Ps. 103:1, 2.”¹

1. Berkhof, *Manual*, 121-122.



Origin of the Soul

- Three general options
 - **Pre-existentialism** – our souls exist in a previous state, and what happened to them then explains the condition now. *“Meets with little favor at present.”*¹
 - **Traducianism** – Our souls are transmitted from our parents.
 - Tries to understand the characteristics we inherit from our parents.
 - Tries to understand where our sinful nature comes from.
 - **Creationsim** – Each individual soul is an immediate creation of God.
 - The soul is created pure, but “acquires its life not above and outside [the fetus], but under and in, that complex of sin by which humanity as a whole is burdened.”²
 - *Objection* – It makes God the direct author of moral evil by putting a soul into a body that will corrupt it. *Answer:* “The descendants of Adam are sinner, not as a result of their being brought into contact with a sinful body, but in virtue of the fact that God imputes to them the original disobedience of Adam.”³

1. Berkhof, *Manual*, 124.

2. Ibid., 125.

3. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 200.



The *Imago Dei*

- BC 14, “We believe that God created man from the dust of the earth and made and formed him in his image and likeness—good, just, and holy; able by his own will to conform in all things to the will of God.”
- Vos, “**Why is this doctrine of the image of God of such great importance for theology?** It is self-evident that by ‘image of God’ is expressed what is characteristic of man and his relation to God. That he is God’s image distinguishes him from animals and all other creatures. In the idea that one forms of the image is reflected one’s idea of the religious state of man and of the essence of religion itself.”¹
- Murray, “The divine image defines the distinct identity of man.”²

1. Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.12.
2. Murray, “Man in the Image of God,” 37.



The *Imago Dei*

- We bear the image of God in two senses:
 - Narrow Sense – spiritual qualities (BC 14; HC 6)
 - Broader Sense – a spiritual being (having a soul), rational being, moral (responsible), having dominion.
- What happens to the image in the Fall?
 - *Lutherans* – the image of God is only in the narrow sense and that is lost in the fall.
 - The image is renewed through regeneration.¹
 - *Roman* – Before the fall the material body was good, but would tend toward evil so the *donum superadditum* was needed to keep the material nature “in check.” In the fall, the image remains, but the *dona superaddita* were lost thereby getting back to the “pure natural state” which would then cause the lower appetites to influence the higher appetites and sin.
 - Because of this understanding man keeps a “free will.”

1. Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 435.



The *Imago Dei*

- After the fall the Reformed say that the narrow sense is lost (the spiritual qualities), and the broader sense is fallen and takes a posture that is contrary to God.
 - We don't lose the *imago Dei* completely; it remains "albeit marred, disfigured, and corrupted in every way."¹
 - Vos, "Man has to be in relation with God in everything he is and he does. So, if original righteousness falls away, unrighteousness replaces it as the natural state."²

Contrary

- **Protestant Reformed** (see slides 12-14 from class 10).
- Horton, "...there is a danger of simply collapsing creation into redemption and common grace into saving grace. Not only does this compromise the gospel; it makes the natural status of personhood (based on the image of God) dependent on its moral renewal in Christ."³

1. Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 435.
 2. Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.14.
 3. Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 434.



Sin

- **The Children's Catechism, Q. 29 What is Sin?** A. Sin is any lack of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God.
 - God has the standard, and when we don't do it, or do something different, we sin.
 - **HC Q&A 3, How do you come to know your misery?** A. The law of God tells me.
- Adam's sin... what does that have to do with me?
 - Everything! He was the *Federal Head* or *Representative* for the entire human race.
 - Why an historical Adam is needed.
 - Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned..."
 - The guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to all mankind and our natures are therefore "poisoned" (HC 7).



Original Sin

- Not just “the original sin” of Adam, but the fact that we are born sinful as a result.
 - Psalm 51:5, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”
 - Connected with “Total Depravity” – another class!
- Sin is not a “substance” (some in the early church taught something like this), but it is a “habit” and “disposition” which “is an active opposition to God and to the good... an active corruption.”¹

1. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, s.v. “privatio.”



17

Types of Sin

- Sin of Commission – doing what we shouldn’t.
- Sins of Omission – not doing what we should.
- More or less heinous:
 - WLC 150, **Are all transgressions of the law of God equally heinous in themselves, and in the sight of God?** Answer: All transgressions of the law of God are not equally heinous; but some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.
 - WLC 151, **What are those aggravations that make some sins more heinous than others?** Answer: Sins receive their aggravations, From the persons offending... From the parties offended... From the nature and quality of the offense... From circumstances of time and place.
 - WLC 152, **What does every sin deserve at the hands of God?** Answer: Every sin, even the least, being against the sovereignty, goodness, and holiness of God, and against his righteous law, deserves his wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come; and cannot be expiated but by the blood of Christ.



18

The “Unforgiveable Sin”

- “Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit” – Matt 12; Mark 3; Luke 12
 - An attack against the office of the Holy Spirit in an “intentional depreciation and blaspheming of the work of the Holy Spirit”¹ and it is against his office and his official work.
 - The one who commits this sin has a conviction of the truth of the gospel as the work of the Spirit (reliable beyond all doubt), but rejecting it and claiming it comes from the devil.² This is a fully deliberate and voluntary sin—you don’t “accidentally” commit it.
- It is “unforgiveable/unpardonable, not because its guilt transcends the merits of Christ, or because the sinner is beyond the renewing power of the Holy Spirit; but because it is a sin that excludes all repentance, sears the conscience, and hardens the sinner.”³
 - Those who think they have committed it, worry about it, and pray about it, haven’t committed it!

1. Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.72.

2. See Ibid, 73; Berkhof, *Manual*, 147-148.

3. Berkhof, *Manual*, 148



Rome’s Classification of Sin

- **Mortal Sin:** A grave infraction of the law of God that destroys the divine life in the soul of the sinner (sanctifying grace), constituting a turn away from God. For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must be present: grave matter, full knowledge of the evil of the act, and full consent of the will.¹
- **Venial Sin:** Sin which does not destroy the divine life in the soul though it diminishes and wounds it. Venial sin is the failure to observe necessary moderation, in lesser matters of the moral law, or in grave matters acting without full knowledge or complete consent.²
- What to do?
 - Mortal Sin – means one is outside a “state of grace”, to die in this state means going to hell. Sacrament of Penance is necessary to be restored.
 - Venial Sin – The Eucharist wipes away venial sins as does doing meritorious works (living charity).

1. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 888-889.

2. Ibid. 902.



Resources

- Berkhof, *Systematic Theology and Manual of Christian Doctrine*
- Horton, *The Christian Faith*
- Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 2: Anthropology*



21

Next Week

- NO CLASS, November 27.
- **December 4 – TULIP**
- Note: No Class on December 11 due to the Christmas Program Rehearsal.



22