



WHY DO WE BELIEVE *THAT* ?

Introduction to Reformed Theology

Class 12

ULTIP

Education Year 2024-2025

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1

Review – Doctrine of Man

- Creation and the Origin of Man
- Elements of man: Dichotomy
- *Imago Dei*
- Sin



2

History

- Jacob Arminius
- Remonstrants
 - Provided their Five Points
- Synod of Dordrecht (Dort or Dordt)
 - International – 27 delegates from 8 other countries
 - Responded to the Remonstrants' Five Points with five of their own in the Canons of Dort
 - A polemical document
- Arminianism is the *default* soteriology of Evangelicalism.
 - We can almost assume a Christian (outside of Lynden) is Arminian if they aren't Roman or Lutheran.



3

Rise of Arminianism

- Reactions against Reformed Orthodoxy / Scholasticism in the 1600s-1700s
 - Rationalism – “I’m smarter.”
 - Pietism – “I’m holier.”
 - Individualism – “I can do whatever I want.”
 - Subjectivism – “It’s all about me.”
- All of these various movements tended to elevate man (and his intellect, abilities, person) above that of God.
 - The Biblical truths about the sinfulness of man and our inability to make ourselves right with God did not sit well with these more modern movements. Arminianism and its synergism fit much better.
 - Especially in America and the radical individualism seen on the frontier.



4

Decline of Reformed Orthodoxy

- For a long time in America the Reformed and Confessional Orthodox were only found in small ethnic communities (Dutch & German Reformed; Scottish Presbyterians).
- The revivals of the Great Awakenings swept through the country and overwhelmed the small groups of confessional Reformed and Presbyterians.
 - Again, Arminian theology appeals to the individual and their “making a decision for Christ on their own.”
- The creeds and confessions themselves are seen as being too rigorous and stifling.
 - Individual “Statements of Faith” are a lot more flexible.
 - Many of the churches are independent and congregational.
 - Church History too is forgotten and the roots of the tradition are lost.



5

TULIP

- Sometimes referred to as “The Doctrines of Grace” or “The Five Points of Calvinism”
- Problems with “TULIP”
 - Not really a good summary of the Canons of Dort, and certainly not of Reformed Theology (and it is in the wrong order of the CoD, and besides it would be *tulp* in Dutch!).
 - Some claim to be “Reformed” because they hold to
 - The acronym could be credited to Rev. Cleland Boyd McAfee in a lecture in 1905, but he could have picked up from somebody else as the terms used in the acrostic predated him.
 - Some of the ways that the parts of TULIP have been characterized aren’t really what Reformed theologians think the Bible teaches anyway.



6

God's Decree

- One or many? In reality (archetypal understanding of God) there is one decree; but for us (ectypal) we speak of the decrees of God in the plural.
 - Horton: As God is simple, so is his decree.¹
- “In fact, an implication of God’s omniscience is that the future is determined. God knows the future exhaustively because he has decreed the future exhaustively.”¹
 - God’s foreknowledge (more in the *ordo salutis*)
- In respect to sin: God allowed / permitted sin, but he is not the author of sin.
 - Some have a hard time with this aspect of God’s sovereignty, but it is a necessary consequence of who God is and who we are as creatures.
 - A real sticking point with Arminian theology are the implications of this issue.
 - [I] embrace free will for two reasons (beyond that we believe it is everywhere assumed in the Bible): it is necessary to preserve human responsibility for sin and evil, and it is necessary to preserve God from being responsible for sin and evil.²

1. Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 311.
 2. Ibid., 309.
 3. Roger Olson, *Against Calvinism*, 23.



God's Decree

- The Bible doesn’t necessarily tell us “how God can decree their sin while holding them responsible; it simply states that this is the case. Therefore, not only the free acts of human beings but sinful actions as well are simultaneously said to be included in God’s plan yet freely willed by humans.”¹
 - Charles Hodge, “So it is utterly irrational to contend that God cannot foreordain sin, if he foreordained (as no Christian doubts) the crucifixion of Christ. The occurrence of sin in the plan adopted by God is a palpable fact; the consistency, therefore, of foreordination with the holiness of God cannot rationally be denied.”²
- The doctrine of predestination includes all of God’s decree concerning all events. Election and reprobation specifically relate to the decree concerning salvation and condemnation of humans.

1. Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 310.
 2. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1.547, quoted in *ibid.* fn. 1.



Unconditional Election

- Predestination: Election and Reprobation
 - Election – “God's eternal purpose to save some of the human race in and by Jesus Christ.”¹
 - Reprobation – “God's eternal purpose to pass some men by with the operation of His special grace, and to punished them for their sin.”²
- “Double” Predestination – predestination includes both election and reprobation.
 - How that works, though, has been vigorously debated!
 - We would say that God is active in election and passive in reprobation.
 - “God grants the mercy of election to some and justice to others. No one is the victim of injustice. To fail to receive mercy is not to be treated unjustly. God is under no obligation to grant mercy to all—in fact, He is under no obligation to grant mercy to any.”³

1. Berkhof, *Summary*, 36.

2. Ibid.

3. R.C. Sproul, “The Reformed View of Predestination”



Scriptural Witness re: God's Decree(s)

- Ps 33:11, “The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.”
- Isa 46:10, “declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose...’”
- Acts 2:23, “...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”
- Eph 1:9-10, “...making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will...”



Scriptural Witness re: Election

- Acts 13:48, “And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.”
- Eph 1:4-5, “even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will. . .”
- Rom 8:29, “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”
- Rom 9:13, “As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”
- Rom 9:18, “As it is written, ‘So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.’”



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Scriptural Witness re: Election

- 2 Tim 1:9, “who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.”
- I Peter 1:1-2, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 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: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.”



12

Scriptural Witness re: Reprobation

- I Peter 2:7-8, "So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,' and 'A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.' They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do."
- Jude 4, "For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."
- Rev 20:15, "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."



13

Infralapsarianism vs. Supralapsarianism

- In the ordering of the decrees of God (ectypal) is the decree to elect / reprobate before (above) or below (infra) the decree to permit the fall?

Infralapsarianism

1. Create
2. Permit the Fall
3. Predestine the elect and pass by or reprobate the rest of fallen sinners
4. Appoint Christ as Savior to redeem the elect
5. Provide means of salvation

Supralapsarianism

1. Predestine some individuals to salvation and others to damnation
2. Create
3. Permit the fall
4. Appoint Christ as Savior to redeem the elect
5. Provide means of salvation

Chart from Fesko, "The Everlasting Love of God" in Payne & Heck, *A Faith Worth Defending*, 47.



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Scriptural Witness re: Infralapsarianism

- Rom 3:23, "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."
- Rom 9:21, "Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?"
- Eph 2:3, "...among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."



15

Infra vs. Supra

- The infra- position is the position of the Reformed Confessions.
- Synod of Utrecht – 1905
 - In regard to the first point, infra- or supralapsarianism, Synod declares: that our Confessional Standards admittedly follow the infralapsarian presentation in respect to the doctrine of election, but that it is evident both from the wording of Chapter I, Article 7, of the Canons of Dort and from the deliberations of the Synod of Dort, that this is in no wise intended to exclude or condemn the supralapsarian presentation; that it is hence not permitted to present the supralapsarian view as the doctrine of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, but neither, to molest anyone who personally holds the supralapsarian view inasmuch as the Synod of Dort has made no pronouncement upon this disputed point.



16

Infra- in the Confessions

- Belgic Confession Art. 16

We believe that— all Adam's descendants having thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of the first man—God showed himself to be as he is: merciful and just.

He is merciful in withdrawing and saving from this perdition those whom he, in his eternal and unchangeable counsel, has elected and chosen in Jesus Christ our Lord by his pure goodness, without any consideration of their works.

He is just in leaving the others in their ruin and fall into which they plunged themselves.

- The Heidelberg Catechism does not speak about predestination.



17

Infra- in the Confessions

- The Canons of Dort

- I.1
- I.6-8
- I.10
- I.15



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Next Class - January 8, 2025

- Continue w/ TULIP

