



## WHY DO WE BELIEVE *THAT* ?

### Introduction to Reformed Theology

## Class 15

### ULTIP, PART 4

Education Year 2024-2025

Rev. Mark H. Vander Pol



1

## Review – ULTIP Part 3

- Definite / Particular Redemption
  - “Limited Atonement”
- Started on Total Depravity



2

## More on Total Depravity

- Thomas Gregory:

For the Christian, such words [Scripture passages on man's sin and depravity] constitute God's definition of every man apart from grace. They comprise a *matrix of reality* which provides meaning for understanding the doctrines of election, definite atonement, and irresistible grace. But prior to being in a state of grace before God, man is in a state of rebellious corruption before God.<sup>1</sup>

- We have seen this “matrix of reality” and how our doctrines all fit together.

1. Thomas M. Gregory, "The Presbyterian Doctrine of Total Depravity" in *Soli Deo Gloria*, 40 (emphasis added).



## Total Inability

- Man, in his natural, unregenerate state cannot come to faith in Christ on his own.

- Berkhof, “man cannot change his fundamental preference for sin to love for God...”<sup>1</sup>

- Ezekiel 37:3-5

And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.

1. Berkhof, *Manual*, 146.



## Total Depravity / Inability

- HC 5, 7, 8
- BC 14, "... having corrupted his entire nature. ...So he made himself guilty and subject to physical and spiritual death, having become wicked, perverse, and corrupt in all his ways."
- CD III/IV.1-3



5

## Total Depravity

- The original Arminians pretty much didn't have a problem with how the Reformed formulated "Total Depravity."
  - But the Reformed did have a problem with the resistible grace aspect of the Remonstrants' teaching because it took away from Total Depravity.
    - "The synod [of Dort] responded to the third and fourth points of the Remonstrance together because only the Arminian teaching on the resistibility of grace clearly shows that their apparently sound teaching on total depravity was not truly meant."<sup>1</sup>
  - Olson doesn't have a chapter against Total Depravity in *Against Calvinism* and "depravity" doesn't make it into the index of *Arminian Theology*.
    - However, he does say, "This account of the human condition is important to keep in mind because it is *why* Calvinists argue that no one can be saved without unconditional election and irresistible grace."<sup>2</sup>
  - Olson does react against what he claims are false accusations of Calvinists against Arminians on Total Depravity, but he also acknowledges some of their theologians have lived up to those accusations.

1. Godfrey, *Saving the Reformation*, 127.  
 2. Olson, *Against Calvinism*, 43.



6

## Rationalism

- Coming out of the Enlightenment, mankind has generally thought that we are inherently good.
  - *Rationalism* is the epistemology that says we know truth by our own reason—what makes sense to us and what we can come up with on our own.
  - *Empiricism* is the epistemology that says we know truth by our own experiences—we know what is true through our senses.
- Both of these epistemologies radically stripped the Bible of all of its authority and sufficiency.
  - Olson cites an Arminian theologian, Philip Limborch, and says of him, “According to Limborch *who no doubt was influenced by the late-seventeenth-century Enlightenment and perhaps by Socinianism*, the fall of humanity did not result in bondage of the will or total depravity, but only in a ‘universal misery,’ which inclines people toward sinful acts. He called this condition an ‘inherited misfortune’ but failed to explicate its exact nature.”<sup>1</sup>

1. Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 147 (emphasis added).



## Rationalism and Arminianism

- Horton:
 

As the Enlightenment dawned, the definition of theology as a practical discipline became reduced to inner morality and experience. Already in the late sixteenth century, modern rationalism appeared, especially with the radical Protestant heresy known as *Socinianism*. Denying the Trinity, original sin, the deity of Christ, and his substitutionary atonement, as well as justification through faith alone, Socinianism anticipated the Enlightenment. *Arminianism*, while generally affirming the ecumenical creeds, downplayed the importance of doctrines it considered nonessential for practical morality and Christian experience.<sup>1</sup>
- Olson likes to distance himself from the “corrupt” versions of Arminianism and he calls out men who speak wrongly. However, many of these men are simply recounting their experiences in “Arminian” churches / Broad Evangelical churches—what the churches were actually teaching.

1. Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 98.



## Rationalism and Arminianism

- R. Scott Clark, “After Simon Bisschop (Episcopius) the Remonstrants began to synthesize with Socinianism.”<sup>1</sup>
  - When there are no guardrails (i.e. Confessions) and things are individualized, there isn’t much stopping theological wandering that can stray far from home, and yet claiming to be part of that camp.
  - To be “Reformed” means to hold to the Reformed Confessions (TFU or WS). People can claim to be “Reformed” but if they reject the confessions, then they are certainly suspect.
- When we interact with Broad Evangelicals, we have to understand their theological ancestors, and some of those who have influenced them.
  - Our Doctrines of Scripture and God, play a huge role in our understanding who we are and how the application of Christ’s redemptive work is applied to us.

1. Clark, CH602 Class Notes, 5.18.07



## Rationalism and the World

- The fact that we still retain some aspects of the *Imago Dei* needs to be properly understood. We *cannot* say that because we still retain some of the image of God, we can use that properly to understand truth by our own reason or experience.
  - We still have reason and a will, but they are totally corrupt. Even how we interpret our senses is totally corrupt.
  - Gregory, “Arising out of rationalism, [one] objection assumes that depravity simply means extreme irrationality and the consequent inability to communicate, or to think, i.e., that sin means man ceases to be man. But such a thought misses the point. As a sinner, man does not cease to be man; he ceases to be good.”<sup>1</sup>
  - “Rationality in itself, in man, does not guarantee goodness.”<sup>2</sup>
    - This has been a claim since the Enlightenment—the inherent goodness of man.

1. Gregory, 37.  
2. Ibid., 38.



## Rationalism / Empiricism and the World

- Gregory, p. 38.
  - Because we can see men and women doing good things (we can observe that with our senses) that means we need to believe that man is basically good.
  - But what is good? What is evil? Who gets to determine that? If not based on experience, then what about reason? But whose reason?
- Gregory, p. 38-39
  - We are dealing with “SIN” not “sins.”
  - Let’s just think about God’s love instead!
- Gregory, p. 41
  - Serious consequences of a bad doctrine of sin.
  - It is wise to accept the biblical judgments about ourselves as being true.
  - All of this leads to doxology!



11

## Rationalism / Empiricism and the World

- Gregory, p. 50-51.
  - When we allow the culture to define sin, it “probably would not be biblical”!
  - Reconciliation and sin thought about through experience and apart from God’s Law or apart from guilt before God doesn’t help anybody—not even society.



12

## Total Inability

- People are unable to come to faith on their own, they need to be regenerated/born again by the Spirit.
  - Ran into this a lot with the Arminian opposition to Unconditional Election. They would agree with us to a point by claiming the need for prevenient grace to overcome that inability.
- HC 8
- Psalm 14, Romans 3



13

## Irresistible Grace

- Very much connected to the doctrine of Total Depravity/Inability.
  - If we are saved by the instrument of faith, the question is what is needed for us to have faith? Do we do something (first) or does God?
  - In Reformed Theology it is better to call this “Effectual Calling”
    - Horton, *For Calvinism* p. 105
    - *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Art. 10
    - We will consider this more fully in our section on the *Ordo Salutis*
    - We will also consider the objection to “The free offer of the gospel.”
- The Gospel not the Law
  - CD III/IV.5-6
- Not coerced
  - CD III/IV.14, 16
  - Horton, p. 108



14

## Irresistible Grace

- John 1:12-13 – “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”
- Acts 16:14 – “One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.”
- I Corinthians 2:14 – “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”
- Ephesians 2:1-9



## Irresistible Grace

- The Gospel not the Law
  - CD III/IV.5-6
- Not coerced
  - CD III/IV.14, 16
  - Horton, p. 108





## Arminianism

- Already talked about prevenient grace in Class 13 (1.15.25).
- Horton, p. 104-105



17

## John 6:44 – “draw”

- Olson, p. 159-160.
- Sproul, *Chosen by God*, 67ff
- ἔλκω
  - How is a word used by the same author? Not a definitive answer, but should give pause if your translation is unique.
    - John 12:32 – “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will **draw** all people to myself.” (ESV).
      - “Will draw” seems pretty definitive, with the answer to “all people” in the surrounding verses.
    - John 18:10 – “Then Simon Peter, having a sword, **drew** it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus)” (ESV).
      - Being used of an inanimate object, so definitely isn't wooed into being used to cut off an ear!
    - John 21:6, 11 – “He said to them, ‘Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.’ So they cast it, and now they were not able to **haul** it in, because of the quantity of fish. ... So Simon Peter went aboard and **hauled** the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn” (ESV).
      - The context is certainly different, but these fish were most definitely “dragged” in!



18

## John 6:44 – “draw”

- Rest of the NT
  - Acts 16:19 – “But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and **dragged** them into the marketplace before the rulers” (ESV).
    - They were not “asked nicely!”
  - Acts 21:30 – “Then all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. They seized Paul and **dragged** him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut” (ESV).
    - Again, Paul didn’t have a choice.
  - James 2:6 – “But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who **drag** you into court?” (ESV).
    - Who would be sued voluntarily?
- The use of ἔλκω in John and the rest of the NT doesn’t sway the interpretation towards “responding freely” and “cooperating.”<sup>1</sup>

1. Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 159-160.



## John 6:44 – “draw”

- Greek Lexicon BDAG<sup>1</sup>
  - 1 – to move an object from one area to another in a pulling motion, *draw*
    - Includes references to John 18:10; 21:6, 11; Acts 16:19; 21:30; and James 2:6
  - 2 – to draw a person in the direction of values for inner life, *draw, attract*
    - Here is where they put John 6:44; 12:32 along with some LXX references as well.
    - Jeremiah 38:3 (LXX) – “I have loved you with an eternal love; therefore I have **drawn** you in compassion” (LES). The surrounding context is the Lord rescuing his people from exile.
    - 4 Maccabees 14:13, “dragging”; 15:11 “pulled”
- Some other LXX uses:
  - Psalm 10:9 – “...he [the wicked] lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket; he lurks that he may seize the poor; he seizes the poor when he **draws** him into his net” (ESV).
  - Habakkuk 1:14-15 – “You [Yahweh] make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler. He brings all of them up with a hook; he **drags** them out with his net; he gathers them in his dragnet; so he rejoices and is glad.” (ESV).

BDAG, s.v. “ἔλκω”



## John Murray on “Irresistible Grace”

- On ἔλκω, p. 57-58
  - P. 58, connection with John 6:37, “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”
- P. 56-57
  - Need of the law of God
  - Sin can be defined by the action of resisting God’s claims.
  - To reject the Gospel is resistance. Because of the enmity of the human heart the Gospel message is rejected—we need “irresistible grace”



## Next Week

- Perseverance of the Saints
- Assurance of Salvation

