



WHY DO WE BELIEVE *THAT* ? Introduction to Reformed Theology

Class 17 ULTIP, PART 6

Education Year 2024-2025

Rev. Mark H. Vander Pol



1

Review – ULTIP Part 5

- Original Sin
- Preservation (Perseverance) of the Saints
- Assurance
- Apostasy



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The Canons of Dort Head 5

- Dr. Godfrey quote on p. 153
- Article 1 – The Regenerate not Entirely Free from Sin
- Article 2 – The Believer's Reaction to Sins of Weakness
- Article 3 – God's Preservation of the Converted
- Articles 4-5 – Serious Sins
- Article 6 – God's Saving Intervention
- Article 7 – Renewal to Repentance
- Articles 8-11 – Certainty and Assurance
- Articles 12-13 – Godliness vs. Carelessness
- Article 14 – God Uses Means
- Article 15 – Reactions to Teaching of Preservation



Rejections of Error

- RE 2 – Dependent ultimately on man's free will.
- RE 3 – Forfeiting justifying faith
 - **Contra** – Federal Vision Theology
- RE 5 – Need for special revelation
 - **Contra** – Netherlands Reformed?
- RE 7 – Temporary vs. Justifying faith
 - **Contra** – Federal Vision Theology
 - Parable of the Sower



Conclusion to the Canons

- Need to judge the church's "official confessions"
 - Warning to false accusers
- Dealing with this teaching in a godly and reverent manner.
- Prayer



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WHY DO WE BELIEVE *THAT* ?

Introduction to Reformed Theology

Class 17

THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST

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6

The Heart of the Gospel

- Why is Christ uniquely able to save us?
- What was his “mission?”
- What did his death on the cross accomplish?
- How does Christ answer our biggest problems?
 - Our Sin (original and actual)
 - Our Enslavement / Bondage to Sin
 - Our Relationship to God
- The doctrine of the Atonement answers all these questions, solves all these problems.



Glossary of Terms

- Expiation
 - The removal of guilt.
- Propitiation
 - The satisfaction of God's wrath.
- Penal
 - Judgment according to the law (of God).
- Satisfaction
 - Complete fulfillment of the legal requirement(s).
- Vicarious / Substitution
 - A worthy representative taking the place of another and the other receiving the benefits.



Glossary of Terms

- Imputation
 - A legal term: crediting to one's account. Also, a covering (as with a robe).
- Active Obedience of Christ
 - Christ's perfect, complete, and full obedience to the will and law of God.
- Passive Obedience of Christ
 - Christ's suffering his entire life, but especially his extreme suffering on the cross.
 - Note: Christ was not passive in his crucifixion!
 - John 10:18, "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."



Cause and Necessity of Christ's Atonement

- Cause
 - "Scripture finds the moving cause of the atonement in the good pleasure of God to save sinners by a substitutionary atonement."¹
- Necessity
 - "...atonement was necessary in view of the justice of God. This was violated by man's transgression, and therefore naturally called for satisfaction. The righteousness and holiness of God, which can brook no sin, certainly cannot simply overlook open defiance to his infinite majesty. God hates sin with a divine hatred, and his whole being reacts against it. Moreover, the veracity of God required that the sentence which he had pronounced on sin should be executed."²

1. Berkhof, *Manual*, 212.
 2. *Ibid.*, 213.



Essentials for the Doctrine of the Atonement

- Francis Turretin, “the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction (as the primary and most important part of the great mystery of piety and the principal foundation of our faith and hope) must be established before all things, defended and confirmed against the fiery darts of Satan, with which it is assailed by innumerable adversaries.”¹
 - **Necessity** – “...God not only has not willed to remit our sins without a satisfaction, but could not do so on account of his justice.”²
 - **Truth** – Christ was properly our substitute and Savior and he made a true and proper penal satisfaction.³

1. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elentic Theology*, 2.417.
 2. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elentic Theology*, 2.418.
 3. *Ibid.*, 426-427.



Essentials for the Doctrine of the Atonement

- Turretin
 - **Unity and Perfection** – “However, we think that the satisfaction of Christ was so perfect and sufficient that he most fully satisfied for all our sins by the one offering of himself, not only for our guilt but also for both temporal and eternal punishment. Henceforth there are no more propitiatory offerings or satisfaction to be made for sin, either in this life or after it, although believers are often subjected to the chastisements of God to promote their penitence and sanctification.”³
 - See quote on page 439.
 - **Mode and Parties** – see quote on page 445.
 - **Object** – For whom did Christ die? For the elect only

3. Turretin, *Institutes*, 439.



Essentials for the Doctrine of the Atonement

- J. Gresham Machen¹
 - It is an action of Christ – Active and Passive Obedience
 - It is historical – It actually happened
 - It is narrow – In the name of Jesus alone
 - Involves the person of Christ – Not a “Christian Experience”
 - Involves the character of God – God’s holiness and justice
 - Deals with sin – penal substitutionary sacrifice
 - Objective in nature – Not subjective, a definite act of God.

1. Machen, "Salvation" in *Christianity & Liberalism*, 117-156.



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Development and Perversions of the Doctrine¹

- Despite the importance of this doctrine for the essence of the Gospel, the church has never been settled, even up to today.
- **Apostolic Fathers** – Used Scriptural terms on the work of Christ. *Epistle to Diognetus*: man’s sin deserves punishment, God giving the Son as a ransom for sin, and the resulting covering of sin by the righteousness of Christ.
- **Apologetists** – Didn’t say much, Christ as a redeemer from the power of the devil.
- **Gnostics** – Christ redeemed from kingdom of darkness (world of matter).
- **Marcion** – Christ’s death was the price at which the God of love purchased men from the creator of the world.
- **Irenaeus** – A little bit of deliverance from the power of Satan, but the death of Christ satisfied the justice of God and thus liberates men.

1. Largely from Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, 165-199.



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Development and Perversions of the Doctrine

- **Recapitulation Theory** – “re-headshaping”¹ “Christ recapitulates in himself all the stages of human life, and all the experiences of these stages, including those which belong to our state as sinners.”²
- **Clement of Alexandria** – The death of Christ is a payment of man’s debt and a ransom; but he gives more prominence to the idea that Christ as Teacher saves men by endowing them with true knowledge and inspiring them to live a life of true love and righteousness.
- **Origen** – see Berkhof, p. 166
 - Horton – *the Ransom Theory* of Origen– The atonement was a ransom paid to Satan
- **Athanasius** – an emphasis on the ethical rather than on the physical element in the process of Christ’s incarnation. Christ operates by his word and example on the hearts of men.

1. Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 502.
2. Berkhof, *History*, 165.



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Development and Perversions of the Doctrine

- **Anselm** – *Cur Deus Homo* (*Why the God Man*) – The ultimate necessity of the atonement was for the honor of God, which could only come through punishment (of the entire human race) or satisfaction (through the gift the Son).
 - Come to be known as the *Satisfaction Theory*, see Horton quote, p. 503
- **Abelard** – Rejects much of Anselm. “...since God is love and is quite ready to forgive irrespective of any satisfaction. All he requires is penitence in the sinner; and he is ready and even eager to pardon the penitent.”
 - *The Moral Influence Theory* – “According to this theory, the purpose of Christ’s death was to provide a moving example of God’s love for sinners that would provoke repentance. The image of Christ’s death on the cross demonstrates God’s love in such a powerful way that only the coldest hearts could resist its lure and remain enemies of God.”¹

1. Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 504.



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Development and Perversions of the Doctrine

- Other Scholastic theologians of the Medieval Ages bounced around the ideas of Anselm and Abelard, some better than others (from our point of view!).
- **Duns Scotus** – *Acceptilation / Acceptation Theory* – see Berkhof quote, p.180.
- **Reformation** – substantial agreement between the Reformers and Anselm, but some differences too, see Horton, p. 503.
 - Sin is a transgression of the law of God and incurs guilt (Anselm: an insult on the honor of God)
 - The atonement is a penal sacrifice to satisfy the justice of God (Anselm: a superabundant gift to God in vindication of his honor.)
 - The act of faith that appropriates the righteousness of Christ (Anselm: exchange between God and Jesus, but nothing for the believer).



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Development and Perversions of the Doctrine

- **Socinus** – see Berkhof, p. 185-186.
- ***Governmental Theory*** – From Arminian Hugo Grotius
 - According to Olson, though, this is not *the* Arminian position since neither, Arminius, Wesley, and many contemporary Arminians don't hold it.
 - See Horton, p. 504, and Olson, p. 224.
- **General Arminian View** (according to Berkhof) – see Berkhof, p. 188-189.
- ***Mystical Theory*** – see Berkhof, p. 198.
- **Protestant Liberalism** – see. Machen, *Christianity & Liberalism*, p. 100.
 - Horton on other theologies and “therapeutic categories” p. 509-510.



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Rome

- **Definition of Expiation:**
 - The act of redemption and atonement for sin which Christ won for us by the pouring out of his blood on the cross, by his obedient love “even to the end” (Jn 13:1) (433, 616, 1475). The expiation of sins continues in the mystical Body of Christ and the communion of saints by joining our human acts of atonement to the redemptive action of Christ, both in this life and in Purgatory.



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Rome – Council of Trent^I

- Fourth Session, Canon XXX
 - If any one saith, that, after the grace of Justification has been received, to every penitent sinner the guilt is remitted, and the debt of eternal punishment is blotted out in such wise that there remains not any debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world, or in the next in Purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened [to him]: let him be anathema.
- Fourteenth Session, Chapters VIII-IX
 - See Schaff. p. 157 & 158
 - Canon IV, Schaff p 164-165
 - Canons XII-XIV, Schaff p. 168-169

1. From Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. 2



Next Week

- *Ordo Salutis*

