
WHAT IS REFORMED THEOLOGY?

Session 2

THE PROBLEM OF CONFESSIONS

- Whether you call it a *creed* or a *confession* is semantics. Both are used to determine doctrinal conformity.
- The problem with creeds and confessions is that they inevitably *cement doctrinal errors* and *hinder doctrinal study*.
- Are they a “necessary evil?” NO! A local church can define its doctrinal distinctives locally, without submitting to anything other than Scripture.

THE REFORMED DOCTRINES OF CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

- The Reformed Creeds hold to a six-day creation, but Reformed theologians often reject their creeds in this area (while defending them vociferously in soteriological areas) and accept theistic evolution.
- Adam and Eve were made “having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfil it: and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change.” (Chapter IV, Paragraph II).
 - This doctrine is “free will” because Reformed theology (i.e.: Covenant theology) believes in a Covenant of Works and a Covenant of Redemption. In this scheme, while you and I are under the Covenant of Redemption, Adam and Eve were under the Covenant of Works.
 - This will be discussed in depth in a later session.
- Providence is the government of God, the activity in which God, “uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least...” (Chapter IV, Paragraph I).
 - It is done, “by His most wise and holy providence” and “according to His infallible foreknowledge.”
 - This is all done, “the free and immutable counsel of His own will” and God is “the first Cause” and “all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly.” All of this clearly says that *God is responsible for all that happens*.
 - Amazingly, Reformed theology still says that God is not *guilty* for being the “Cause” of every thing that takes place, because, “by the same providence, He ordereth them [the things that happen through His providence] to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.”
 - That is, God isn’t responsible because He doesn’t make things happen with *primary* actions, but with *secondary* actions.
 - This is an unconscionable position, in my opinion.
 - As to “the sinfulness thereof” (i.e.: of the actions that come by God’s providence), they, “proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is, nor can be, the author or approver of sin.” (Chapter IV, Paragraph IV).
- The Belgic Confession has the same theology: “nothing happens in this world without His appointment; nevertheless, God neither is the Author of nor can be charged with the sins which are

committed. For His power and goodness are so great and incomprehensible that He orders and executes His work in the most excellent and just manner” (Article XIII).

- The Providence doctrine that God causes all things but is not responsible for any thing is, “surpassing human understanding, we will not curiously inquire into farther...” (Article XIII).
 - I believe that NO CREED and NO DOCTRINE whatsoever is “off limits” to our *curious inquiry*.
- Because of this doctrine, “nothing can befall us by chance” (Belgic, Article XIII).
 - Deuteronomy 22:6, 1 Samuel 6:9, 2 Samuel 1:6, Ecc. 9:11, Luke 10:31 – all use the word *chance* in the KJV.

THE DOCTRINES OF THE FALL AND OF ORIGINAL SIN

- The fall of man was designed by God for His benefit: “This their sin God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to His own glory.” (Westminster, Chapter VI, Paragraph I).
- In the fall, they became, “wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body” (Ibid., paragraph II).
- Because they are “the root of all mankind,” then, “the guilt of this sin was imputed” to all of Adam’s descendants.
- Is it dangerous to deny imputed guilt? Dangers listed by Tom Hicks at Founders.org (a Calvinist SBC organization) <https://founders.org/2013/07/01/problems-with-denying-imputed-guilt/>
 - It leads to denying Christ’s imputed righteousness.
 - One is expressly taught, one is not!
 - It leads to denying that Adam’s natural descendants inherit a nature “inclined toward sin.”
 - Personal sin is not necessary for human death and separation. If you are born on Mars you die on Mars by nature of your birth, not your behavior.
- If “imputed guilt” meant “all men die,” then we could accept it. What Reformed Theology means by “imputed guilt” is that all men are *guilty* and “wholly defiled” (thus *totally depraved*).
- Imputed guilt for Reformed theology means that, “we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil” (Ibid, paragraph IV).
- According to the Belgic Confession, man was created, “capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God. Man had “honor” and “excellency” rather than total depravity (Belgic, XIV, agreeing with Westminster IV, II).
- After original sin, man is “wicked, perverse, and corrupt in all his ways” (Belgic XIV). Notice that Adam (and his offspring) did not just become guilty, but *wicked, perverse, and corrupt*.
- The Belgic is even stronger in language on imputed guilt than the Westminster: “through the disobedience of Adam original sin is extended to all mankind; which is a corruption of the whole nature and a hereditary disease, wherewith even infants in their mother’s womb are infected, and which produces in man all sorts of sin, being in him as a root thereof, and therefore is so vile and abominable in the sight of God that it is sufficient to condemn all mankind” (Belgic, Article XV).
- The doctrine of the fall and of “original sin” has been so twisted by Reformed Theology as to make man into a grotesque creature unable to accept the Gospel. This is far beyond anything the Scripture teaches. In actuality, the fall of man created a *lost condition* for mankind, and nothing more.

Next session: God’s Covenants with Man, and more!