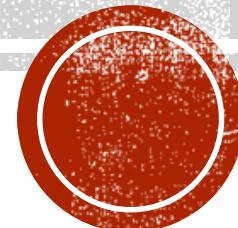
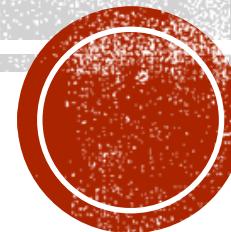


WHAT IS REFORMED THEOLOGY?

It's Bigger Than You Might Think



INTRODUCTION



CORRECTING FALSE STEREOTYPES

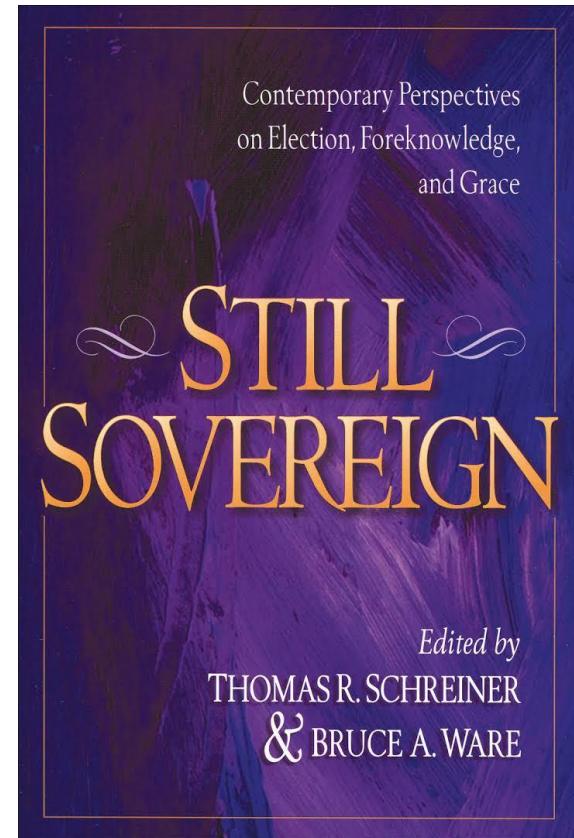
- Reformed theology is **NOT** an innovation; it is an ancient faith
- Reformed theology is **NOT** a cult; it is thoroughly orthodox
- Reformed theology is **NOT** proof-texting; it is thoroughly biblical
- Reformed theology is **NOT** Calvinism; it is much broader and deeper
- Reformed theology is **NOT** only about election / predestination or God's sovereignty; it is much richer
- Reformed theology is **NOT** a denomination; it is a greater category than ecclesiology



WHY BE REFORMED?

Calvinism ought to be defended not because of its inherent logic, symmetry, or comprehensive structure *per se*, but because the substance of its biblical understanding is more compelling than that of its rivals.”

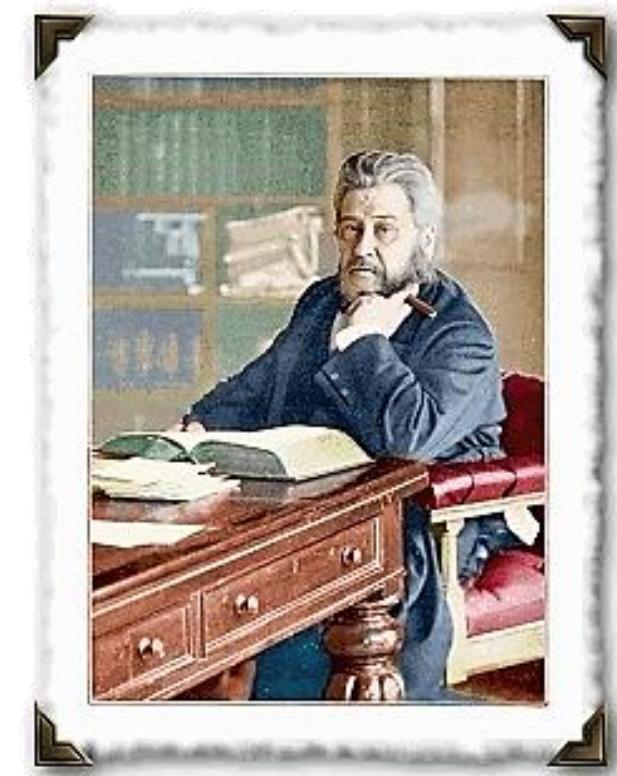
Bruce Ware, *Still Sovereign*, 204



WHY BE REFORMED?

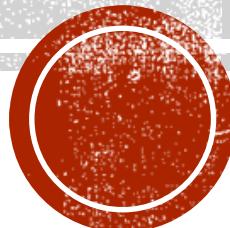
“...what is the heresy of Arminianism but the addition of something to the work of the Redeemer? Every heresy, if brought to the touchstone, will discover itself here. I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else”

Charles Spurgeon



WHAT IS REFORMED THEOLOGY?

It's Bigger Than You Might Think

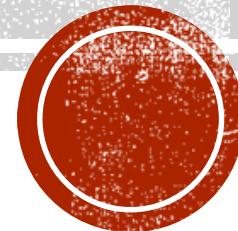


INTRODUCTION: THE PILLARS OF REFORMED THEOLOGY

- Covenant Theology
- The five *sola's* of the Reformation – Grace alone, Faith alone, Christ alone, Scripture alone, The Glory of God alone
- The supremacy of God in all things
- The doctrines of grace – **Total depravity; Unconditional election; Limited atonement; Irresistible grace; Perseverance of the saints**
- A high view of the church and the sacraments
- The Christian life as *coram deo*



COVENANT THEOLOGY



OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

“The doctrine of the covenant lies at the root of all true theology. It has been said that he who well understands the distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, is a master of divinity. I am persuaded that most of the mistakes which men make concerning the doctrines of Scripture, are based upon fundamental errors with regard to the covenant of law and of grace. May God grant us now the power to instruct, and you the grace to receive instruction on this vital subject.”

C.H. Spurgeon



OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

- “The term “covenant” is so closely associated with Reformed theology that the words “covenant” and “reformed” are often used interchangeably. In many circles, “Reformed theology” is “covenant theology”; “covenant theology” is “Reformed theology.””
- Covenant theology is the gospel set in the context of God’s eternal plan of communion with his people, and its historical outworking in the covenants of works and grace (as well as in the various progressive stages of the covenant of grace) (cf. Duncan; Packer)

“In Scripture “covenant” is the fixed form in which the relation of God to his people is depicted and presented.”

Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation.*



WESTMINSTER CONFESSION – 7.1-3

1. The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto Him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which He hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.
2. The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.
3. Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.



WHAT IS COVENANT THEOLOGY?

- It is a way of reading Scripture.
- Yet, it is more than this; it is much, much more.
- The Bible forces us to read it covenantally. How?
 - By the story it tells.
 - By the place it gives to Jesus in the covenant story.
 - By the specific parallel between Jesus and Adam in Romans 5:12-18; 1 Corinthians 15:21ff.
 - By the explicit declaring of the covenant of redemption in John's gospel.



WHAT IS A COVENANT?

- God reveals himself throughout the Scriptures as a covenant-making God: It is the life-embracing bedrock reality of the covenant relationship between the Creator / Redeemer and Christians.
- Three aspects of God and our relationship to him we covenant forces us to recognize:
 - God is transcendent
 - God is immanent
 - We are qualitatively and quantitatively different
- Definition - It is simply a legal arrangement between two parties, usually established with an oath and defined by divinely established sanctions.



OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

- A covenant typically includes these parts (cf. Deuteronomy as Suzerain-vassal treaty):
 - The parties involved (usually two);
 - Stipulations guiding the relationship between the one making the covenant and the one with whom the covenant is being made;
 - Sanctions for disobedience and blessings for obedience;
 - Some sort of bond is made between the two parties
- There are only two ways in which a covenant may be treated by the parties – observation or violation.



OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

Three basic types of covenant in Scripture:

- Parity
 - Mutual compacts (cf. Genesis 20:14-18)
- Royal Grant
 - Unilateral promises of gracious gift (cf. the Covenants of Grace with Noah, Abraham, David, Christ's people)
- Suzerain-vassal
 - Treaty of the Great King (cf. Adam; Mosaic)



THREE KEYS

- There are three major covenants in Scripture:
 - Redemption
 - Works
 - Grace
- These covenants are informed either by the basic principle of works or grace.
- We must be aware of the covenants as we read Scripture.



COVENANT OF REDEMPTION

The covenant of redemption is an eternal pact between the persons of the Trinity. The Father elects a people in the Son as their mediator to be brought to saving faith through the Spirit. (Horton)

- There is an eternal agreement between the **Father** and the Son to save sinners (Ephesians 1:4; 3:11); the Son must obey the Father (John 10:18)
- As a result of his obedience to that agreement, **Christ** has been given a people by the Father (cf. John 6:39; 10:29; 17:2, 4-10; Ephesians 1:4-12; Hebrews 2:13)
- These people are the ones who are called and kept by the **Holy Spirit** for the consummation (Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:11-13; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:5)



COVENANT OF WORKS (OR CREATION)

“God’s pact with Adam in his integrity, as the head of the whole human race, by which God requiring of man the perfect obedience of the law of works promised him if obedient eternal life in heaven, but threatened him if he transgressed with eternal death; and on his part man promised perfect obedience to God’s requirement.

Heidegger 9, 15

Quoted in Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*



COVENANT OF WORKS

Though not overt, the substance of a covenantal arrangement is found in Genesis 1-3:

1. Adam is not simply an individual, he is a representative head (Romans 5:12ff)
2. The relationship between God and Man was established through divine words and acts of commitment.
3. Though “covenant” is not mentioned in the text of Genesis 1-3, the Scriptures later use this very language to describe that arrangement.

The relationship between the Covenant of Redemption and the Covenant of Works



THE COVENANTS OF GRACE

- The covenants of grace include the covenants God made with post-Fall Adam, Noah, **Abraham**, **Moses**, David, and the **New Covenant in Christ**.
- The most important implication of the covenant of grace is that there has always been only one way of salvation.
- Yet there are differences in the administration of this covenant.



THE COVENANT OF GRACE: ABRAHAM

- In a series of revelations (Genesis 12-17) God promises three distinct blessings to Abraham: a royal heir, a great nation as his offspring, and a promised land.
- It is essential to realize that each of these promises is fulfilled in two distinct stages, first according to type and finally according to fulfillment.



THE COVENANT OF GRACE: ABRAHAM AND MOSES

The Mosaic covenant is a typological republication of the covenant of works:

As the covenant of grace, under which the ancients were, is not to be confounded with, so neither is it to be separated from, the Sinaitic covenant: neither are we to think that believers were without all those things which were not promised by the Sinaitic covenant, and which the typical covenant, because of its weakness and unprofitableness, could not bestow; as they were likewise partakers of the Abrahamic covenant, which was a pure covenant of grace: and hence were derived the spiritual and saving benefits of the Israelites.

Herman Witsius



THE COVENANT OF GRACE: MOSES

- The apostle Paul often contrasts the Mosaic law (works) with the Abrahamic promise (grace). He assumes that these two principles are fundamentally opposed to one another: “For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise” (Galatians 3:18)
- The Mosaic Covenant is founded upon the Abrahamic promises.
- But this covenant also functions on a typological level.
- This covenant has been supplanted by the New covenant in Christ.
- Relationship between the Covenants of Grace and the Covenant of Works



COVENANTS: SUMMARY (CE. HORTON)

There is covenantal **unity** in Scripture:

1. “Law” and “promise” characterize two different kinds of covenants that exist within the same history.
2. Old covenant believers are ‘saved’ by faith in the promise of Christ.



COVENANTS: SUMMARY (CF. HORTON)

There is covenantal **disunity** in Scripture:

1. The covenants with Adam after the Fall, as with Noah, Abraham, and David, represent unconditional divine oaths.
2. The suzerain covenant is constitutive of the pact made between God and Israel at Sinai through its successive cycles of violation, restoration, transgression and finally exile.
3. We must recognize fulfillment and obsolescence.
4. We cannot attain the everlasting promises of God through the covenant of law.
5. There is a distinction to be made between God's people: by reception of promise and by birth.



FOUR CONCLUSIONS

1. The gospel is not properly understood until it is viewed within a covenantal framework.
2. The Word of God is not properly understood until it is viewed within a covenantal framework.
3. The reality of God is not properly understood until it is viewed within a covenantal framework.
4. Many key theological realities and their implications are not properly understood until they are viewed within a covenantal framework.

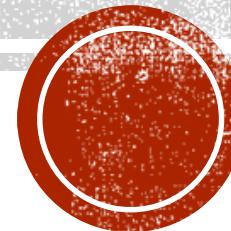


IMPLICATIONS FOR READING SCRIPTURE

- Historical-grammatical
- Gospel-centered
- Redemptive-historical
- Scripture interprets Scripture
- *Pactum Salutis, Historia Salutis* and *Ordo Salutis*
- Application of Scripture – our inability; Christ's all-sufficiency



SOIA SCRIPTURA



SOLA SCRIPTURA

Definition - the Scriptures alone are the **ultimate authority** in the life of the believer and the church. It alone is to be our standard and our foundation.

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

Westminster Confession, 1, 6



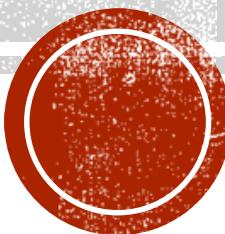
SOLA SCRIPTURA

Implications:

- Sufficiency - The Bible is the only infallible rule of what we are to believe and how we are to live.
- Necessity - Scripture is "most necessary" because through it alone comes "that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation"
- Inerrancy - The Bible is free from error as it sprung from the hand of God.
- Clarity – The Bible is clear, though not easy, to understand



**THE SUPREMACY OF
GOD IN ALL THINGS**



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SUPREMACY?

“Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all”

1 Chronicles 29:11-12

The sovereignty of God is his absolute, independent right of disposing of all creatures according to his own pleasure.

Jonathan Edwards



THE SUPREMACY OF GOD IN ALL THINGS

This means:

- God is under no external constraints of any kind as he relates to his creation
- The only constraints he is under are his nature and will
- God's sovereignty applies to **all** things – including salvation

God is the creator and therefore the owner, possessor, and Lord of all things, apart from him there is no existence or ownership. He alone has absolute authority. Always and everywhere his will decides. . . That will is the final ground of all things, of their being, and of their being as they are.

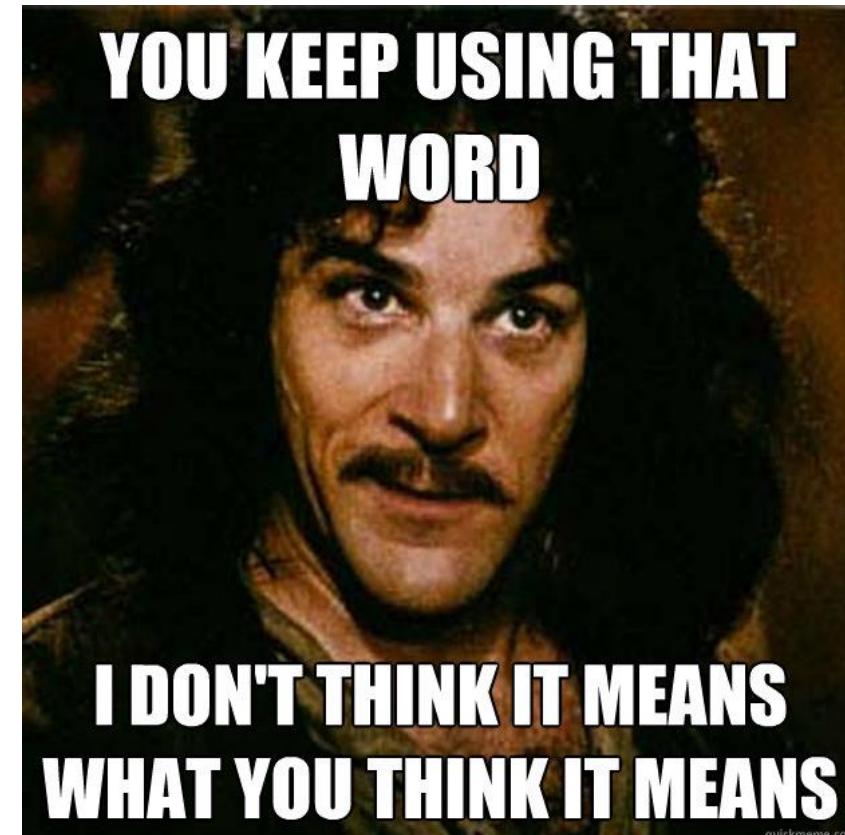
Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation*



NOT ALL AGREE...

Arminians:

- The issue is NOT *that* God is in control, but *how* he exercises that control. (General vs. specific sovereignty)
- God is in control of his directives; beyond that his control is (merely) permissive but not determinative.
- “God may and no doubt sometimes does bring about some event by placing people in circumstances where he knows what they will freely do because he needs them to do that for his plan to be fulfilled.”
(Olson)



NOT ALL AGREE...

Arminian theologian Roger Olson articulates what he calls “a relational view of God’s sovereignty”:

“a relational view of God’s sovereignty is one that regards God’s will as settled in terms of the intentions of his character but open and flexible in terms of the ways in which he acts because he allows himself to be acted upon. Only such a view of God’s sovereignty does justice to the whole of the biblical drama, to God as personal, to human persons as responsible actors and potential partners with God in God’s mission.”



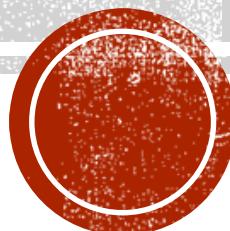
THE SUPREMACY OF GOD IN SALVATION

- Edwards – “it [God’s Sovereignty] implies that God can either bestow salvation on any of the children of men, or refuse it, without any prejudice to the glory of any of his attributes, except where he has been pleased to declare, that he will or will not bestow it.”
- Three key texts in relating Gods supremacy in all things to salvation:
 - Ephesians 1
 - Romans 9
 - John 6



THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

TULIP



INTRODUCTION

The key difference between a Calvinist and an Arminian is how they understand how we get saved; that is, how we move from a condition of spiritual unbelief to a condition of heartfelt belief or faith in Christ. And the key difference is this: **Calvinists** believe that God has to produce in us the decisive desire for Christ. And **Arminians** believe we must produce in ourselves the decisive desire for Christ. The **Arminians** say that God helps us. He helps all people, but we provide the last, decisive impetus and desire for that belief.

John Piper



INTRODUCTION

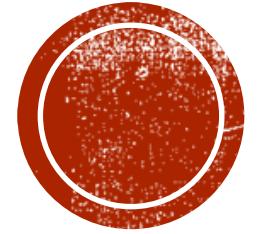
- The Reformed understanding of salvation is **NOT** a product of an external system, nor is it attributed to one or only a few theologians, nor is it the implication of a narrow view of God, nor is it the result of over-emphasizing a few proof-texts.
- It is, **instead**, a result of biblical realities, from Genesis to Revelation, properly understood.



OVERVIEW

- **Total depravity – Radical corruption** – Due to Adam's sin, human nature is corrupt, and every person stands condemned in God's sight. If God does not act directly upon an individual, that person has no hope of being saved.
- **Unconditional election – Sovereign election** – God elects certain persons to be saved, based solely upon *his* determination, apart from anything the person may do or not do.
- **Limited atonement – Particular redemption** – The full, saving work of Christ is directed specifically to the elect.
- **Irresistible grace – Effectual calling** – God acts in grace upon the elect so that they are able to come to faith in him (regeneration). They do not resist this movement of the Spirit.
- **Perseverance of the Saints – Preservation of the Saints** – God ensures that his people will remain his saved people throughout their lifetime.





RADICAL CORRUPTION

aka. Total Depravity

A horizontal collage of four black and white photographs. From left to right: 1. A close-up of a person's face with a distressed expression. 2. A view of a city street with buildings in the background. 3. A person sitting on a bench in a public space. 4. A person walking through what appears to be a debris-strewn area or a slum.

RADICAL CORRUPTION: OVERVIEW

- Man is spiritually dead. Because of the fall, man has become spiritually dead, blind and deaf to the things of God and is therefore unable of himself to choose spiritual good and determine his own destiny.
- As Christopher Blum states, "Because man's will is not free - for it is in bondage to his evil nature - he will never, and in fact can never, choose the goodness of God over the sinful desires of the flesh."
- Thus we can never speak of man having "free will" since it is always in bondage to sin apart from salvation in Christ.



RADICAL CORRUPTION

- This doctrine is agreed upon by both Arminians and the Reformed alike:
 - See Article III of the Remonstrance, 1610
 - Roger Olson, “With Calvinists I can affirm that we are all spiritually dead apart from supernatural grace...”
- Pervasive depravity means that: [Anthony Hoekema, *Created In God’s Image*]
 - The corruption of original sin extends to every aspect of human nature: to one’s reason and will as well as to one’s appetites and impulses; and,
 - there is not present in man by nature love to God as a motivating principle of his life.



RADICAL CORRUPTION

This doctrine does **NOT** mean that:

- The unregenerate person is totally hardened to matters of the conscience (matters of right and wrong);
- The sinful person is as sinful as possible - there are genuine benevolent unregenerate people who show better 'fruit' than some believers do;
- The unregenerate person is unable to perform certain actions that are good and helpful in the sight of others;
- The sinner engages in every possible sin.



RADICAL CORRUPTION

- Sin is a matter of the whole person
- The unregenerate person's good acts always contain an element of sinfulness
- Sinners are completely unable to do anything about their sinful condition
- There are a plethora of biblical pictures that affirm this corruption:
 - spiritual blindness and darkness (Ephesians 4:18);
 - spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1-2, 5; Colossians 2:13);
 - slavery to sin (Romans 6:20);
 - polluted or corrupted (Psalm 51, 58)
- Our rebellion is totally deserving of eternal punishment



EXCURSUS: FREE WILL IN LIGHT OF DEPRAVITY

- The case of Jerry and Ed
- Does the Bible teach that people have the power and initiative within their own will to believe the gospel?
 - The question is **NOT**, “Are people morally responsible for their actions?”
 - The question is also **NOT**, “Do people have the opportunity to believe?”
 - The question, rather, is this: “Do people have a free and unfettered will by which they are able to believe?”



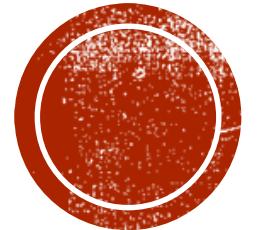
EXCURSUS:

FREE WILL IN LIGHT OF DEPRAVITY

What are the implications of this?

- Total depravity means that no matter how “civil” or “compassionate” or “industrious” or “law-abiding” someone might otherwise be in his dealings with other people, he is utterly and willfully loath to all that Christ is and says.
- It means we have free agency but not free will (compatibilism)
 - **Free agency** – the ability to act according to one’s desires and inclinations without being compelled to do otherwise by something or someone external.
 - **Free will** – our will is the extension and invariable expression of his nature. As he is, so he wills. A man is therefore **not** free to act or to will or to choose contrary to his nature.





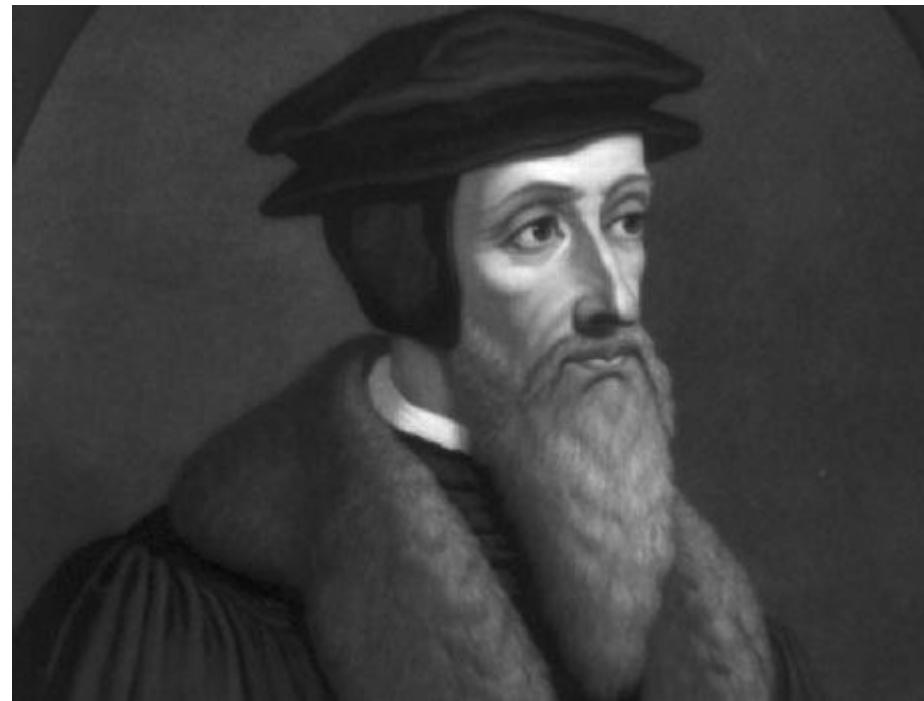
SOVEREIGN ELECTION

aka. Unconditional Election

“It is better to limp along this path than to rush with all speed outside it.”

John Calvin

Institutes 1.6.3



SOVEREIGN ELECTION: OVERVIEW

- God's election is unconditional. God's choice of certain individuals for salvation was not based on any foreseen response of obedience, future faith, repentance or any other action.
- From eternity past, God the Father chose certain individuals from every tongue, tribe, nation and generation of humanity to redeem - the elect - and passed over the rest of mankind - the reprobate.
- Thus God's choice of who he would save was rooted entirely in His sovereign, transcendent, perfect will, the nature or specifics of which the Bible leaves as a complete mystery to us. No one deserves salvation, since "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
- Salvation is, therefore, entirely of God's grace to save some out of the mass of perdition.



SOVEREIGN ELECTION

Aspects of divine election that are key to understand:

- It is God's choice alone - he saves whomever he pleases according to his own will and for his own purposes.
- It is an unconditional choosing - God's choice of who will be saved rests on his sovereign decision alone - it lacks external conditions (such as an act of faith seen in the future).
- Election is **monergistic** (God alone is responsible for our salvation)



SOVEREIGN ELECTION

Romans 9 - "Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue not because of works but because of his call, she was told, "The elder will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."'" (vv. 11–13)

Ephesians 1:3-14 - "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace." (vv.4–6); "We who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory" (v. 12).

2 Thessalonians 2:13 - "We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth"

2 Timothy 1:9 - God is the one "who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago."

Revelation 13:7 - "And authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain."

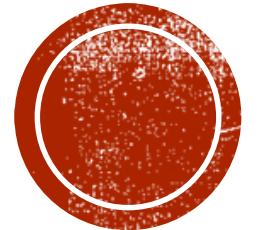
Revelation 17:8 - "The dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to behold the beast, because it was and is not and is to come."



SOVEREIGN ELECTION: OBJECTIONS

- Why wouldn't God save everyone if he has the power to do so?
- Romans 8:29, "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son." Does this not suggest that God's election is a result of seeing our faith?
- Election is fatalistic / mechanistic; it makes people into robots who simply do what they were eternally programmed to do.
- Election is not fair!
- If election is true, then there are unbelievers who die in sin who never had a chance to believe.
- The Bible says that God wills to save everyone.





PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

aka. Limited Atonement

PARTICULAR REDEMPTION: OVERVIEW

- Christ's death was designed to **actually secure** the salvation of all of God's chosen people, rather than merely make it possible. God has determined that all for whom Christ sacrificed Himself will be saved.
- To put it in a slightly different way, "not only was Christ's Atonement designed for, and given to, only the elect; it also actually secured salvation for them, and purchased all the means to such, including their faith and repentance, thereby guaranteeing their salvation. Thus, the Atonement did not merely offer its objects the opportunity to be redeemed, but it wholly and effectively redeemed them!"

(Christopher Blum)



PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

Here are the options:

- If Christ's death **actually saved all men from all of their sins** you have universalism.
- If Christ died to save **some of the sins of some men**, then Christ did not accomplish their salvation and thus did not save them at all. He merely made them savable. This is the Arminian perspective.
- If Christ's death **actually saved men from their sin**, then his death cannot apply to all men.



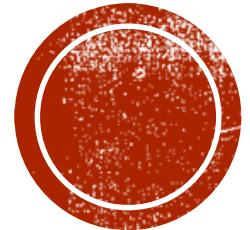
PARTICULAR REDEMPTION: OBJECTIONS

2 Timothy 2:3-6 - “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, *who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a *ransom for all*, to be testified in due time.”

2 Peter 3:9 - “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, *not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*”

To these we could add **John 3:16, 4:42; 1 John 2:2**





EFFECTUAL CALLING

aka. Irresistible Grace

EFFECTUAL CALLING: OVERVIEW

- When the external call to salvation is made through gospel proclamation, the Holy Spirit extends a special inward call to the elect people that God wishes to save at that particular time and regenerates them.
- This regeneration creates within them a new heart and enables them to freely and willingly believe in Christ as Saviour and Lord. The new birth precedes and makes possible saving faith.
- In drawing his elect to himself, God does not force people "against their will, squealing and kicking as it were" to believe in him. (Carson)
- This doctrine emphasizes that "it is God's choice of the sinner, and not the sinner's of God, that ultimately and fully causes salvation, since the sinner's very willingness to put faith in Christ is solely a gift from God that was purchased at the Cross" (Christopher Blum)



EFFECTUAL CALLING

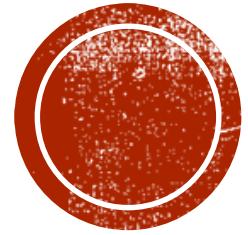
- The doctrine of irresistible grace **DOES NOT** mean that every influence of the Holy Spirit cannot be resisted.
- It **does** mean that the Holy Spirit can overcome all resistance and make his influence irresistible.
- Key passage – John 6



EFFECTUAL CALLING: OBJECTIONS

1. "Yes, the Holy Spirit must draw us to God, but we can use our freedom to resist or accept that drawing."
2. God draws all men, not just some





PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS

aka. Perseverance of the Saints

PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS: OVERVIEW

- All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of God and therefore continue to persevere in faith.
- Once the Holy Spirit regenerates people, and they place their trust in Christ, they are eternally kept in their state of salvation by God. He faithfully preserves all whom He set out to save and drew to him.
- Likewise, whenever anyone apparently “receives Christ,” but later falls away and dies in that state, they were never truly saved at all - for anyone whom the Holy Spirit calls was predestined by the Father and atoned for by the Son, and thus is sealed with God’s promise of eternal life.



PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS

What would it mean if a true believer could fall away?

For God the Father:

1. He would not be worthy of glory nor of our praise and worship
2. His purpose in redemption would fail and unravel
3. His will would be frustrated and fail in fulfillment
4. It would mean the Father has refused to answer the prayers of his Son
5. God, supposedly all-powerful, would be exposed as impotent and helpless
6. God, supposedly righteous, would be exposed as a liar and an imposter
7. God would prove to be faithless



PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS

For God the Son:

1. Christ will have failed in the purpose for which He died
2. Christ will have failed in the purpose for which He was raised
3. Christ will have failed in the purpose for which He now intercedes in the presence of the Father
4. Christ will fail to accomplish the goal for which He is to return to this earth
5. Christ will prove to have been a liar

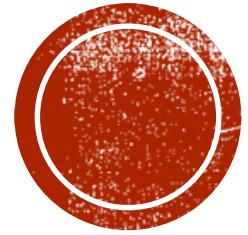


PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS

For God the Holy Spirit:

1. The Holy Spirit will have failed in his work of sealing
2. The Holy Spirit will have failed in his ministry as a pledge of the future consummation of our redemption
3. The Holy Spirit will have failed in his ministry as first fruits





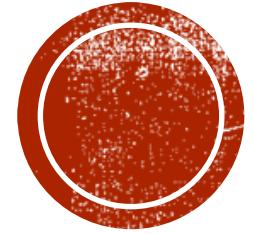
ANSWERING MISCONCEPTIONS



ANSWERING MISCONCEPTIONS

1. Reformed theology says that people are robots and do not have free will.
2. If people are elect there is no reason to witness.
3. If God elects only some to salvation, he is an unloving and unfair God.
4. The belief that salvation cannot be lost undermines the pursuit of continued holiness.
5. Election is a violation of free will; thus God can potentially drag people into heaven that don't want to be there, and reject those who do.





REFORMED THEOLOGY & ARMINIANISM COMPARED

REFORMED THEOLOGY & ARMINIANISM

According to Arminianism:

Salvation is accomplished through the combined efforts of God (who takes the initiative) and man (who must respond) - man's response being the determining factor. God has provided salvation for everyone, but his provision becomes effective only for those who, of their own free will, "choose" to cooperate with him and accept his offer of grace. At the crucial point, man's will plays a decisive role; thus man, not God, determines who will be recipients of the gift of salvation.

According to Calvinism:

Salvation is accomplished by the almighty power God. The Father chose a people, the Son died for them, the Holy Spirit makes Christ's death effective by bringing the elect to faith and repentance, thereby causing them to willingly obey the gospel. The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration) is the work of God and is by grace alone. Thus God, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.



REFORMED THEOLOGY & ARMINIANISM

Reformed / Monergism

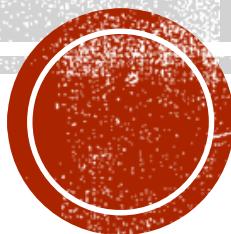
- Total depravity
- Unconditional election
- Limited atonement
- Irresistible grace
- Perseverance of the saints

Arminianism / Synergism

- Total depravity cancelled by preventient grace; free will determinative
- Conditional election (our choice as seen by God's foreknowledge)
- Limited atonement (efficacy)
- Resistible grace (free will determinative)
- Salvation can be lost

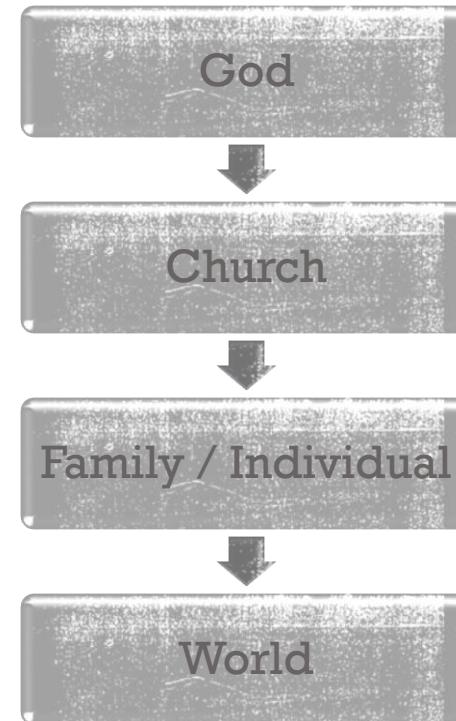


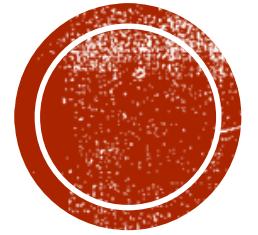
A HIGH VIEW OF THE CHURCH



HIGH VIEW OF THE CHURCH

- If we hold Christ as precious, the church must be precious. We are drawn together by Christ. We regard our assembling together, too, as precious.
- Reformed piety moves in the opposite direction of typical North American spirituality: from the public means of grace to the family to the individual, then to the World.





EXCURSUS

Why we are Credo-Baptists and not Paedo-Baptists

WHY PAEDO-BAPTISM?

- The primary argument comes from the relationship between Old Testament circumcision and New Testament baptism and its application within the visible church.
- Christian baptism, so goes the paedo-baptist argument, is the New Testament counterpart to Old Testament circumcision.
- Infant baptism does not guarantee the salvation of the infant, but sets them apart as children of covenant parents who are thus included in the external blessings and responsibilities of the people of God.
- Colossians 2:11-12 is their main text.



WHY NOT PAEDO-BAPTISM?

1. There are no explicit instances of infant baptism in Scripture.
2. Baptism is portrayed in the New Testament as a symbol of the beginning of spiritual life. – Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12
3. Baptism is consistently portrayed as inextricably tied to (conscious) faith and repentance. – Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12-13, 36; 10:47-48
4. In all the examples of “household” baptisms the broader contexts make clear that only “believers” were baptized.
5. When the New Testament church debated in Acts 15 whether circumcision should still be required of believers as part of becoming a Christian, it is surprising that not once in that debate did anyone say anything about baptism standing in the place of circumcision.



WHY NOT PAEDO-BAPTISM?

6. We must take into account the nature of the New Covenant inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Jesus and one significant way in which it differs from the covenant God made with Abraham.
7. We must understand the differences between the new covenant people called the Church and the old covenant people called Israel.
8. The paedobaptist understanding of sacrament, which is biblically correct, runs contrary to their practice of baptism.
9. Paedobaptist definitions of baptism run contrary to their practice of baptism.
10. I can't help but notice the absence in the New Testament of any explicit portrayal of an infant being baptized.



HOW CAN WE GET ALONG?

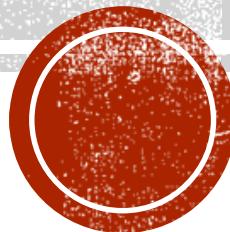
- A number of Reformed denominations would consider us to be a false church on account of our view and practice of baptism.
- However, we would not return the ‘favor’. Why not?

“When I weigh the kind of imperfection involved in tolerating an invalid baptism because some of our members are deeply persuaded that it is biblically valid, over against the kind of imperfection involved in saying to a son or daughter of the living God, “You are excluded from the local church,” my biblical sense is that the latter is more unthinkable than the former. The local church is a visible expression of the invisible, universal, body of Christ. To exclude from it is virtually the same as excommunication. And no serious church takes excommunication as an invitation to attend the church down the street.”

John Piper



THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AS *CORAM DEO*



LIFE *CORAM DEO*

- *Coram Deo* = Before God
- Starts with a true experience of the gospel - conviction of sin, cleansing by the sacrifice of Christ and glad response to his call to serve him.
- We have been delivered from the bondage of law-breaking to enjoy the freedom of law-keeping.
- The ‘cultural mandate’ (Genesis 1:28) still applies to us. This means witnessing, in word and life, to Christ’s Lordship over all things.



