

Student's Notes

Introduction to  
Reformed Systematic Theology

An outline based on the book **SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY**, Louis Berkhof

[PDF](#)

by  
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One is sometimes glad to not be a great theologian;  
one might so easily mistake it for being a good Christian. <sup>1</sup>  
- C.S. Lewis



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## To the student

The spaces after each heading are for taking notes. This is intended as a convenience only. Whether or not the teacher requires the students to use this manual is up to him.

All the lecture instructions to the teacher have been stripped out except for Bible texts in ScreenTip. Some are not ScreenTip because the reference is too long to fit into the dialogue box allowed by the software.

The students must read the pages in Berkhof that follow the lesson title, previous to the next lesson. Page numbers for reading assignments in Berkhof correspond to the electronic version at: <https://bit.ly/2LWmXTI> If the teacher uses another version of Berkhof such as the printed book, he will correspond the page numbers with that version.

Introduction and glossary: These should be read before proceeding with the course. It will help familiarize the student with terms and procedures.

The Bible used is the English Standard Version. The teacher may use another version if he chooses.

## Introduction: What is systematic theology?

Systematic theology is a study of Christian doctrines in their relationship to one another in a logical, consistent system.

### Why study systematic theology?

1. A grasp of biblical theology as a system allows a teacher to present truth with greater conviction and impact. It reveals the proportion of values between doctrines. Not all truths have the same importance. Christians who major on minors show a failure to grasp biblical revelation as an overall system.
2. Systematic theology helps a person detect error. This has been the experience of those who have taken a course on this subject.
3. It helps us understand the history of the church in its theological struggles throughout the centuries, as well as recognize differences between denominations.
4. It is a boost to faith. The theology of the Bible is an intricate system of related teachings in a logical relationship with every other doctrine. Over a period of 1600 years with more than twenty writers in three languages, these teachings blend together into a coherent and consistent system. As a phenomenon, this could have only one possible source — God!

### Materials

- **ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION BIBLE**
- **SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY** by Christian Reformed theologian Louis Berkhof, edition 1996, electronic format, PDF: <https://bit.ly/2LWmXTI>
- Handout essays by Roger Smalling

### Why Berkhof's Systematic Theology?

Berkhof's style is concise and to the point, avoiding the wordiness of other systematics. The well-defined outline of key points helps the student. Refutations of erroneous views are presented in a factual and non-offensive way. One volume covers it all.

### What does the Bible say about the importance of doctrinal studies?

#### The whole counsel of God

The apostle Paul tells us he did not hesitate to announce *the whole counsel of God*. (Acts 20:27) We conclude that the entire content of the divine plan of redemption is knowable and credible. Paul made it clear to the Ephesian elders it was their responsibility to understand that plan.

#### The apostolic example

The first thing the apostles taught new converts was sound doctrine. [Acts 2:42](#)

### Identification of error

We are warned to avoid those who teach contrary to sound doctrine. [Romans 16:17](#)  
This implies the ability to distinguish good doctrine from bad.

We are also warned to avoid those who tend to be carried about by fad doctrines.  
[Ephesians 4:14](#)

The apostle John tells us to reject religious teachers with false doctrine regarding the person of Jesus Christ. [2 John 9](#)

### What it means to be a good servant.

Paul describes a good minister as one who is *trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed*. (1Timothy 4:6) From this we deduce it is impossible to be a trained gospel minister without a thorough study of sound doctrine.

### Contending for the faith

Jude exhorts us to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.  
[Jude 3](#)

The words *the faith* refer to the entire body of teaching that comprises Christianity. Jude insists there is a body of teaching we can understand clearly enough to defend. Those who pervert that system of doctrine, particularly people who assail the sovereignty of God and his grace, are destined for condemnation.

## Why do some disdain systematic theology?

### Supposed ambiguity

Some have the attitude that theology is an ambiguous subject like philosophy and assume a diversity of systems supports that attitude.

If this were true, we would have to say that the Bible is obscure; a revelation to hinder truth; that God is incapable of clear communication. Worse, God created man with the capacity for logic and then gave him an irrational revelation that condemns mankind for not believing it.

### Diversity of theological systems

Does a variety of systems insinuate it is impossible to know which is correct?

Let us suppose a math teacher presents a problem to ten students and they all give different answers. What does this prove about the answer? Nothing. Several possibilities exist: Either one student got it right or they all got it wrong.

What does it prove about the difficulty of the problem? Nothing. It could be simply that the students are poor students. Or the teacher is incompetent.

The same is true of any subject. The mere existence of different systems proves nothing nor does it indicate theology is difficult or that different systems are equally valid.

Learning biblical theology is like learning a language or musical instrument. At first the various elements seem disjointed and unrelated. Then comes a day when like an epiphany the student sees the system as a whole. It becomes obvious and the student feels in control.

### **The beauty of hermeneutics**

Different systems of theology have their roots in erroneous methods of investigation. These are logic errors. Correct hermeneutics will reveal one valid system of biblical theology, commonly known as *Reformed*.

### **Indifference**

Some consider theology unimportant because they fail to see its practical consequences. This attitude is self contradictory because it is a doctrine in itself. Moreover, it betrays a lack of zeal for truth.

### **Is it possible for more than one correct system of theology to exist?**

No, because Christians believe only one God exists and one plan of salvation. Theology is a study of these. Therefore, there is only one correct system.

This, of course, does not imply we know everything about God. We know that those things revealed about him do not contradict each other at any point. It is impossible that two mutually exclusive theological systems could both be correct about God.

The same is true about salvation. God has not provided a variety of saviors, nor distinct means of salvation, according to the whim of man.

## Glossary

**ANTHROPOLOGY:** (Greek: *anthropos* = man) The study of man. In theology, this refers to doctrines relative to our origin, nature and spiritual condition.

**ANTHROPOMORPHIC:** (Greek: *anthropos* = man; *morphos* = form) Having human characteristics. In theology, it sometimes refers to the view that God, though a spirit, is in the shape of a man. Scripture uses aspects of human anatomy to express divine characteristics or actions such as *the hand of the Lord*. These are analogies, not to be taken literally.

**ANTINOMIANISM:** (Greek: *anti* = against; *nomos* = law) A heresy stating that the law of God expressed in the Old Testament has no relevance for Christians.

**APOSTASY:** Falling away from the Christian faith entirely.

**ARMINIANISM:** A system of theology elaborated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by a Dutch pastor, Jacob Arminius. He taught *moral free will*, *conditional election*, *universal sacrifice of Christ*, *insecurity of the believer*. He denied *effectual call* and declared the possibility of Christians losing their salvation. Various branches of the evangelical movement have subscribed to this system, such as Pentecostals, Nazarenes and Methodists.

**ATONEMENT, LIMITED:** The view that Christ died to save the elect only and accomplished that purpose fully. Salvation is applied to the elect, not merely provided as a possibility. This view, sometimes called *particular redemption*, is held by the Reformed branch of theology.

**ATONEMENT, UNIVERSAL:** The view that Christ died to provide a possibility of salvation for everyone, depending on individual free will. In this sense, salvation is not an accomplishment by Christ but a provision, depending on man's response.

**ATTRIBUTES, COMMUNICABLE:** Those attributes of God that can logically be held in common between himself and finite creatures, such as character qualities: love, hate, righteousness, etc.

**ATTRIBUTES, INCOMUNICABLE:** Those attributes of God unique to himself that cannot be held in common with finite creatures. These include omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence.

**CALL, EFFECTUAL:** A Reformed doctrine of grace affirming that God draws his elect to Christ irresistibly through the preaching of the gospel. Sometimes called *irresistible grace*.

**CALL, UNIVERSAL:** The call by God to repentance through the preaching of the gospel, regardless of who is elect or not. Sometimes labeled *general call*.



**CALVINISM:** The system of theology that typified the reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, elaborated by French theologian John Calvin, emphasizing the sovereignty of God in salvation. In opposition to Arminianism, it affirms *total depravity, unconditional election, particular redemption, effectual call* and *preservation of the elect*.

**COVENANT OF GRACE:** The divine agreement made with mankind in which God grants life and blessing to his elect on the basis of grace alone.

**COVENANT OF WORKS:** The divine agreement made with mankind in which God offers life and blessing to humanity on the basis of perfect obedience.

**DOCTRINES OF GRACE:** The doctrines of the reformation having to do with the application of divine grace for the salvation of man. See [CALVINISM](#).

**ECCLESIOLOGY:** (Greek: *ekklesia* = assembly) The theology of church government.

**ELECTION, UNCONDITIONAL:** A doctrine of grace affirming that God chose certain people for salvation before the foundation of the world, without regard of foreseen conditions they could fulfill.

**ESCATOLOGY:** (Greek: *eschatos* = end) The study of prophetic events leading to the second coming of Christ and final judgment.

**FEDERALTHEOLOGY:** An aspect of biblical theology in which the consequences of an individual's actions fall on their descendants. That individual is sometimes referred to as "federal head." See [ORIGINAL SIN](#) as the key example.

**FREE WILL:** The ability of the will to make choices without external compulsions. Views about limitations of the will vary according to different branches of theology.

**GRACE, COMMON:** Divine benevolence for humanity in general for the preservation of the human race, such as provision of food, rain or other such blessings. This does not include personal salvation and is sometimes called *general grace*.

**GRACE, SPECIAL:** Divine favor for personal salvation.

**HERMENEUTICS:** The science of the interpretation of literature; in theology, the rules for correct interpretation of biblical passages.

**IMMUTABILITY:** Unchangeable. In theology it refers to God's character as well as the unchangeable nature of divine decrees relative to salvation of the elect.

**IMPUTATION:** The central aspect of the doctrine of justification, referring to the divine decree to attribute to the believer the free gift of the perfect righteousness of Christ. This doctrine is developed in Romans Chapter 4.

IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS: Synonym of *imputation*.

JUSTIFICATION: A divine declaration relative to salvation in which God forgives a repentant sinner and imputes the righteousness of Christ. It means legally *declared* righteous, not *made* righteous.

LEGALISM: The practice of moral law as a means of acquiring salvation rather than through faith alone in Christ alone.

MEANS OF GRACE: The divine use of practical means to communicate grace. Regarding unbelievers, the preaching of the gospel is a means. Among believers, reading of Scripture, prayer and ministries of the church are means of grace for their spiritual growth.

OMNIPOTENCE: The divine attribute of being almighty.

OMNISCIENCE: The divine attribute of knowing everything.

OMNIPRESENCE: The divine attribute of being infinite.

ORDO SALUTIS: The order of events in salvation. In theology, this term generally refers to the relationship of regeneration to faith.

ORIGINAL SIN: The doctrine referring to the fall of Adam in which Adam's sin, including all its effects and consequences, is attributed to the entire human race.

PNEUMATOLOGY: (Greek: *pneuma* = spirit) The study of the Holy Spirit, his person, deity, spiritual gifts and work in the lives of believers.

PREDESTINATION: The doctrine affirming that all of reality is planned by God from before the creation of the world. In reference to salvation, it refers to the eternal destiny of people. In this sense, predestination may be viewed in two parts: election and reprobation.

PRESERVATION: The divine work of preserving the elect from falling away from the faith.

PROVIDENCE: The divine arrangement of circumstances to guarantee the outcome of God's decrees.

REDEMPTION: The basic meaning is *to buy back*, based on the Old Testament concept of purchasing slaves in order to free them. In theology, it refers to the divine work of "purchasing" the elect from slavery to sin through the sacrifice of Christ.

REFORMED: The 16<sup>th</sup> century movement that attempted to reform the Catholic Church by encouraging it to conform its doctrine and practices to the Bible. The Catholic rejection of this attempt resulted in a new movement called Protestant.

REPROBATION: The divine decree to *pass by* some people in election and leave them in the sinful condition they themselves have chosen, thus leading to their final judgment.

SANCTIFICATION: The process in the life of believers of learning to live holy lives.

SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD: The attribute of God in which he governs and controls everything.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY: A Reformed doctrine affirming that sin has permeated every aspect of a human being, so as to render him unable to produce any spiritual good that would contribute to his salvation. It does not deny that the sinner is capable of good social conduct or even of religious devotion. It insists that any good work done by a sinner is unacceptable to God because it proceeds from a corrupted source.

UNIVERSALISM: A heresy affirming that all humanity, without exception, will be saved. (Not to be confused with Universal Atonement.)

## Lesson 1: Existence of God – pp.20-21; 26-28

**Purpose:** Explain the two main approaches to apologetics: evidentialism and presuppositionalism.

### General versus special revelation

Theologians separate revelation about the existence of God into two categories: General and special.

**General revelation:**

**Special revelation:**

### Evidentialism

**Strengths and weaknesses**

### Presuppositionalism – pp.20-21

**Strengths and weaknesses**

### The five “proofs” of Aquinas – pp.26-28

Thomas Aquinas, the 12<sup>th</sup> century Italian bishop, d.1274, expounded on five “proofs” of God’s existence in his monumental work, **SUMMA THEOLOGIAE** (Summary of Theology).

**Ontological:**

**Cosmological:**

**Teleological:**

### **Ethnological:**

### **Moral:**

Note: The cosmological and moral arguments are the only ones used by Scripture, Romans 1:18-20; 2:13-16

#### **From this lesson we learn...**

- General revelation is God showing his existence through nature and conscience.
- Special revelation is God's revelation of himself to the elect only through the knowledge of Jesus Christ.
- Presuppositionalism is an approach to apologetics that presupposes the existence of God without reference to evidences.
- Evidentialism is the approach to apologetics based on evidence in nature and human conscience.
- The five proofs of Aquinas for the existence of God are: Ontological, cosmological, teleological, moral, ethnological.

**Homework reading:** Handout, Smalling's [Debate on apologetics](#); Berkhof pp.61-79 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 2: Divine attributes – pp.61-79

**Purpose:** Define the incommunicable attributes versus communicable to form a concept of God as opposed to that of liberalism or other unbiblical movements. Also, to show the balance between immanence and transcendence.

### Grounds for believing in the attributes of God

#### Influence of liberal theology

### Incommunicable attributes (natural) - pp.61-68

- Omnipotence:
- Omniscience:
- Omnipresence:

In addition to these:

- Spirituality:
- Immutable:
- Eternal:
- Simplicity:
- Sovereignty:

#### Two impossibilities

- 
- 

### Evidentialism versus presuppositionalism in the attributes

### Communicable attributes (personal or moral) - pp.69-79

#### Holiness

#### Love

#### Grace

### Indivisibility of attributes

### Essence versus substance

## Transcendence versus immanence

### Incomprehensible

#### From this lesson we learn...

- Incommunicable attributes of God are deducible from creation.
- Incommunicable attributes are those he cannot have in common with finite creatures. These are sometimes called *natural attributes*.
- Communicable attributes are those God can share in common with his creatures, sometimes called *personal attributes*.
- God's transcendence means his quality of being is beyond anything created.
- Immanence means God is in everything he created without being a part of it.
- Incomprehensibility means God is understandable only by analogy because of our finiteness.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 62-64 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 3: Immutability – pp.62-64

**Purpose:** To define immutability and show it is necessary to understand God's covenant relationship with his people.

**Definition:** *Immutability* means unchangeable.

### Texts supporting divine immutability

[Psalm 33:11](#); [Isaiah 14:27](#); [46:10](#); [Matthew 24:35](#); [Hebrews 1:12](#); [6:17,18](#); [13:8](#); [James 1:17](#)

### Arguments from Charnock on immutability<sup>2</sup>

1. .
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

### From this lesson we learn...

- Immutability means *unchangeable*. It is an incommunicable attribute of God logically connected to other incommunicable attributes, in particular omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.72-74 in preparation for the next class.



## Lesson 4: Philosophical difficulties in communicable attributes – pp.72-74

**Purpose:** To clarify certain attributes of God that are frequently misunderstood such as the nature of his knowledge, love, holiness and justice.

### Divine knowledge

.

### Foreknowledge – pp.73

[Acts 2:23](#); [4:27,28](#); [Romans 9:16](#); [Ephesians 1:11](#)

#### Prophetic view

#### Probability theory

### God's goodness: Two viewpoints

#### Love

Three main viewpoints exist regarding the love of God for mankind.

#### Universal and equivalent:

#### Universal but not equivalent:

#### Distinctive:

Titus 3:5 tells us,

*But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,...*

## **Holiness**

This attribute can be seen in two ways:

- 
- 

### **Justice as punishment of sin - pp.280-287**

**Corrective:**

**Retributive:**

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- Reality is a product of divine decrees.
- Divine foreknowledge refers to his purposes, not a mere prediction of the future.
- Holiness is God's primary personal attribute.
- God's justice is either corrective or retributive.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 89-107 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 5: Trinity - pp.89-107

**Purpose:** Describe the traditional doctrine of the Trinity versus common heresies.

### Biblical parallelism

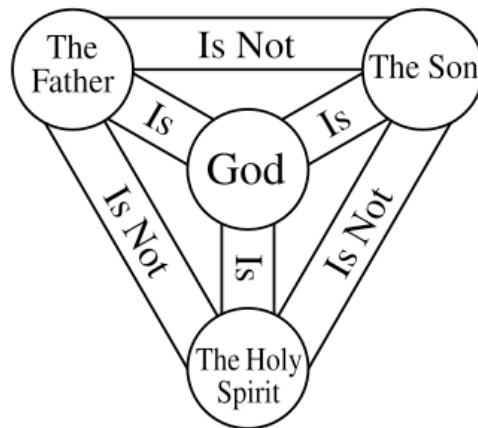
Two false extremes:

- Tri-theism:
- Modalism (Sabellianism).<sup>3</sup>

### Historic orthodox view

The Athanasian Creed

The traditional “shield” of the Athanasian creed is below:



### Ontological versus Economic Trinity

.

### The Filioque

1. The Holy Spirit is sent by both the Father and the Son, [John 15:26](#).
2. He is called the Spirit of Christ in [Romans 8:9](#) and [1Peter 1:11](#).

3. Redemption in Christ is applied by the Holy Spirit, [Hebrews 9:14](#).

## **Distinctions of properties and functions**

Properties and functions must differ between the persons of the Trinity, without which it would be difficult to describe them as distinct persons.

**The Father:**

**The Son:** [Hebrews 10:7](#).

**The Spirit:** Regenerates, [Titus 3:4](#); reproves, [John 16:8](#); guides, [Romans 8:14](#).

**Defenses against anti-trinitarianism** (such as [Jesus Only](#); [Jehovah Witnesses](#), [Modalism](#)).

4. Baptism of Jesus, [Mark 1:10-11](#)—
5. The distinctions of persons in [1John 2:22](#)—
6. The baptismal formula:
7. The different persons address each other by pronouns such as *you* and *I*.  
[Hebrews 1:8](#); [John 12:28](#)

## **Common errors**

**Anthropomorphism:**

**Tri-theism:**

**Modalism:**

**Jesus only:** [1John 2:23,24](#).

**Unitarianism:**

**From this lesson we learn...**

- The historic orthodox view of the Trinity holds that the members are equal in essence but distinct in persons.
- The ontological Trinity refers to the relationship between the members.
- The economic Trinity refers to the manner in which each of the members relate to man in redemption.
- The Filioque is a doctrine claiming the Holy Spirit is generated by the Son also and not by the Father only.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.118-136 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 6: Predestination - pp.118-136

**Purpose:** To demonstrate that the doctrines of election and predestination are biblical and show the differences.

### Predestination: Two parts

This doctrine contains two elements: Election and reprobation.

**Election:** Review Romans 9 and [Ephesians 1:11](#).

**Reprobation:** [Deuteronomy 2:30](#); [Proverbs.16:4](#); [Isaiah.63:17](#); [Matthew 11:25](#); [3:11](#); [John 10:26](#); [12:40](#); [17:9](#); [1Peter 2:8](#); [2Peter.2:12](#)

**Preterition:**

### Texts used by Arminians to refute election

**Argument “in Christ” from [Ephesians 1:4](#)**

Refutation:

**Argument from sanctification**

[2Thessalonians 2:13](#)

Refutation:

**Argument from foreknowledge**

2Peter 1:2

*...elect... 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:*

Refutation:

**From Romans 8:30**, *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined...*

The assumption is that God looking into the future and saw saving faith in some and chose those accordingly.

Refutation: [foreknew](#).

Moreover, saving faith is given to the elect only according to [John 6:44,65](#); [Acts 13:48](#); [Titus 1:1](#); [1Timothy 1:14](#).

## Warning

[Romans 9:11](#); [Ephesians 1:11](#)

## Care in presenting this doctrine

### From this lesson we learn...

- Predestination is the view that God has predetermined the final fate of every human being and may be viewed in two ways: Election and reprobation.
- Election is God's decree to save certain individuals.
- Reprobation is the decree of God to pass by the non elect and leave them in the sinful condition they have chosen.
- The Arminian argument on the grounds of foreknowledge is inadequate to disprove election.

**Homework reading:** Handout, Smalling's essay, [Foreknowledge: Does it explain election?](#); Smalling's essay on [2Peter 3:9](#); Berkhof pp.106-117 in preparation for the next class;

## Lesson 7: Decrees – pp.106-117

**Purposes:** Describe what is meant by divine decrees and their characteristics.

### Characteristics of divine decrees

**Immutable:**

**Eternal:**

**Inevitable:**

**Non-contingent:**

Key texts: [Psalm 33:11](#); [Proverbs 19:21](#); [Job 23:13](#); [Isaiah 46:10](#); [Daniel 4:35](#); [Matthew 10:29](#); [Ephesians 1:11](#)

### Emphasis on non-contingency

### Refutations of the Arminian concept of foreknowledge

1)

2)

3)

4)

### From this lesson we learn...

- The divine decrees are immutable, eternal, inevitable and not contingent on man's will.
- The Arminian view of divine decrees based on God's foreknowledge is contrary to Scripture and self-contradictory.

**Homework reading:** Smalling's article, [Distinctions in the will of God](#)



## Lesson 8: Wesleyan Arminianism

**Purpose:** Expose Arminianism as the main Protestant rival to Reformed theology,.

### **Distinctives of Wesleyan Arminianism**

#### **Arminian distinctives (remonstrances)**

**Common grace:**

**Universal atonement:**

**Universal justification:**

**Restoration of free will to all:**

**Prevenient grace:**

#### **Arminians insist that...**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4) See Smalling's essay on [logic fallacies](#) regarding free will.

#### **Summary of the Arminian viewpoint**

#### **Key texts used by Arminians**

- 5) On universal justification: [Romans 5:18](#)

6) On universal atonement: [2 Corinthians 5:14](#) See Smalling's [handouts](#) on these two verses.

7) Commands and exhortations to repent:

### **Arminianism argue that...**

8) Commands to obey imply an inherent ability to do so.

a) Answer:

9) The will is not free unless it is morally neutral or undetermined.

a) Answer:

10) God provides sinners a *prevenient grace*, enough of a free will to allow the person to choose or reject Christ.

a) Answer:

11) God has freed the will of man through the sacrifice of Christ to give everyone an opportunity to be saved. They reason that God would not condemn people without an opportunity to be saved.

a) Answer:

b) [John 6:44,65](#); [Romans 8:30](#)

12) God would never leave his fallen creatures in such a state, with no opportunity for salvation.

a) Answer: [Hebrews 2:16](#).

13) The sacrifice of Christ justifies sinners from the guilt of Adam's sin but not from personal guilt.

a) Answer:

14) God's decree of salvation depends on his foreknowledge of man's response.

a) Answer:

15) God's common grace makes saving grace available to all.

a) Answer:

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- Arminianism is the main Protestant rival to Reformed theology.

- Arminians believe the sacrifice of Christ purchased free will for all people and the opportunity to be saved.
- The various distinctives of Arminian theology are based on logic fallacies.

**Homework reading:** Smalling's handouts on [Romans 5:18](#) and [2Corinthians 5:14](#); Berkhof pp. 477-494 for the next class.

## Lesson 9: Atonement and Common Grace - pp.477-494

**Purpose:** Some movements, in particular Arminianism, affirm that the death of Christ purchased a common grace to make salvation an opportunity for everyone. This has led to other errors such as the social gospel, restoration of creation, restoring free will for all men. This lesson refute the error.

### **Scripture shows no connection between the sacrifice of Christ and the provision of common grace for all mankind**

An examination of the texts proposed for this view, show the following defects in interpretation:

1.

2.

3.

### **It is unnecessary that the sacrifice of Christ be involved for common grace to exist**

4. The atonement was for the expiation of sin and the appeasement of the wrath of God. ([Romans 3:24,25](#))
5. God's benevolence toward mankind in general is adequate grounds for common grace apart from the atonement. This is clear from [Acts 14:16,17](#); [1Timothy 4:10](#)
6. It does not follow logically that common grace implies a divine obligation to provide special grace.
7. Even if a clear connection could be shown between the atonement and the provision of common grace, the burden of proof would remain to show why this would restore free will to humanity in general.
8. It is unnecessary to assume that unless common grace is provided for in the cross that mankind has no "opportunity" to repent. The divine law written in the conscience is an opportunity if they wanted to obey it. ([Romans 2:14-15](#)) The light of nature in creation is clear if they would stop suppressing the message it conveys.

**From this lesson we learn...**

- No scriptural connection exists between the sacrifice of Christ and the provision of common grace for all mankind.
- God's benevolence toward the human race in general is adequate grounds for common grace. The atonement was unnecessary to provide it.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.137-152 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 10: Doctrine of creation - pp. 137-152

**Purpose:** Show the various views of creation and God's relationship to it.

### The concept of *ex nihilo*: Out of nothing

Two different views of *ex nihilo*: what is meant by God creating something out of nothing

**The term *nothing* means that God did not create the universe out of anything from himself**

***Nothing* means "no previously existing material"**

- 1) [Romans 1:20](#); [Jeremiah 10:12](#); [27:5](#); [32:17](#)
- 2) The [LXX](#), [Jeremiah 10:12](#),
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

### God's purposes in creation

**Self revelation: Romans 9:22-24**

**Benefit of the elect**

[Mark 13:20](#); [2Tim.2:10](#); [1Cor.3:21-23](#)

### Did God *need* creation?

Arminianism:

## **Refutations**

1)

2)

3)

## **Theistic evolution**

This view holds that development of life on earth happened by the principles of evolution God created.

### **Is it heresy?**

The debate continues.

## **Young earth versus old earth creationism**

### **Young earth**

### **Old earth**

The debate continues.

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- All branches of Christendom hold that God created the universe out of nothing.
- Philosophical difficulties exist as to what is meant by the term *nothing*.
- God is not dependent on anything he created.

- Controversy exists within Christian circles as to whether or not theistic evolution is heresy.
- Views about creation can be divided into young earth versus old earth creationism.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.180-195 in preparation for the next class.



## Lesson 11: Providence - pp.180-195

**Purpose:** Define providence and why it is important to understand.

**Definition:** God's activity by which he preserves and governs all aspects of his creation.

### Providence versus decrees

#### Concurrence versus deism

#### Christ and providence

[Matthew 28:18](#); [John 17:2](#); [Romans 14:9](#); [1Corinthians 8:6](#); [Ephesians 1:21](#);  
[Colossians 1:18](#); [1Peter 3:22](#)

#### Benefit of the elect

[Mark 13:20](#); [2Tim.2:10](#); [1Cor.3:21-23](#)

### The means of providence

([WCF Chapter 5-3](#))

### Arminian and Reformed perspectives of providence

#### Arminian:

**Reformed:** God is actively involved in everything at all times. This is concurrence.

- 1) [1Timothy 4:10](#); [Acts 14:17](#)
- 2) [James 1:17](#)
- 3) [Acts 17:26,27](#)
- 4) [Ephesians 1:11](#)

## Common man's viewpoint

**Berkhof:**

**C.S. Lewis:**

## Jesuits and the doctrine of pious fraud

### From this lesson we learn...

- Two views of creation *ex nihilo* exist.
- Old earth versus young earth is a continuing debate among Christians.
- God is present and active in his creation. This is called *providence* in contrast to deism which teaches God is not involved in his creation.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.207-212 in preparation for the next class.

## PART TWO: ANTHROPOLOGY

Doctrine of Man: Origin, nature, sin and covenants

### Lesson 12: The soul; nature of man - pp.207-212

**Purpose:** Explain the origin of the soul, the two main views of how a human being is composed and what is meant by *image of God*.

#### **Origin of the soul: Traducianism versus creationism**

This deals with how God communicates the sin of Adam to the soul.

##### **Traducianism:**

WCF [Chapter VI, Article 3](#).

##### **Creationism:**

#### **The composition of man: Trichotomism versus dichotomism**

Two views as to the composition of human nature:

##### **Trichotomism:**

##### **Dichotomism:**

##### **Trichotomism: Strength and weakness**

Two Bible texts are used to support this view: [1Thessalonians 5:23](#) and [Hebrews 4:12](#)

##### **Dichotomism: Strength and weakness**

[Isaiah 42:1](#) [Matthew 6:25](#).

[Romans 8:10](#); [2 Corinthians 7:1](#)

#### **From this we learn...**

- Two views exist as to the manner in which the sin of Adam is imputed to man:

- Traducianism: The sin of Adam is transmitted by natural procreation.
  - Creationism: God creates the soul with adamic corruption in it and places it in the person.
- The composition of a human being from a theological perspective can be divided into two camps:
  - Trichotomism: The view that man is composed of three parts; body, soul and spirit.
  - Dichotomism: The view that man is composed of two parts, inner man (spirit or soul are synonyms) and the outer man (body).

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.219-229 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 13: Man as the image of God – pp.219-229

**Purpose:** Show what is meant by the image of God in man.

**In what sense is man the image of God and angels are not?**

[Hebrews 2:5-8](#). [Genesis 1:26,27](#)

**Lost image?**

[James 3:9](#); [1Corinthians 11:7](#).

**Male and female in the image of God**

[Genesis 5:1,2](#).

[1 Corinthians 11:7,8](#)

[1Timothy 2:12](#)

[1Timothy 2:14](#)

**Different viewpoints on the image of God**

**Roman Catholic:**

**Arminian:** (See lesson on [Wesleyan Arminianism](#).)

**Reformed:** [James 3:9](#)

**From this we learn...**

- Man is the image of God (*imago dei*). The precise definition of the term remains a matter of debate, although the Reformed branch tends to view it as man's dominion over creation as co-regent with God.
- Men and women are equally the image of God although man was created first and therefore has authority in his relationship with the woman in marriage and the church.
- Views vary on the fall's effect on the image of God: Totally lost, partially lost or simply soiled.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.247-259 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 14: Sin, evil and darkness – pp.247-259

**Purpose:** Define sin according to Scripture; discuss and refute errors.

### Biblical definition of sin

[1John 3:4](#)

[Romans 5:13](#) See [WCF Chapter 16, Art.1](#)

Sin is also a state of being, not merely an act.

1. *Hamartia*: Sin as a specific act. Found only in [Mark 3:29](#), [Romans 3:25](#)
2. [1Corinthians 6:18](#) *Hamartema*: Also a specific act but with emphasis on the resulting spiritual state. The Bible tends to perceive sin more as a state of being than a mere act.<sup>4</sup>

The unregenerate are viewed in Scripture as living in a domain of darkness.. [John 3:19](#); [5:24](#); [1John 2:11](#); [Acts 26:18](#)

### Erroneous definitions

[Romans 2:14](#)

### View of philosophers who commit such errors:

**Deprivation view, Leibnitz:**

Refutation:

**Illusion view, Spinoza:**

Refutation: An illusion of what?

**Consciousness view, Schleiermacher:**

Refutation:

### Religious errors

**Selfishness view, Strong:** Evil is selfishness.

Refutation: Where is the standard by which he concluded that selfishness is evil?

**Free will view, Arminianism:**

Refutation: John [3:19](#); [12:46](#).

### The unpardonable sin

[Matthew 12:32](#); [Mark 3:29](#); [Luke 12:10](#)

Is this defined as rejecting Christ until death? This view is held by some and is an error:

- 
- 

The texts, in their literal sense say speaking evil of the Holy Spirit is the unpardonable sin. Berkhof's comments on this seem plausible but not authoritative, p.277.

If [1John 5:16](#) refers to this sin, then we are prohibited from praying for those who commit it.

### **Venial or mortal?**

[Romans 6:23](#)

### **Judgments for sin**

- 1) Romans 1:18-22
- 2) Luke 13:2-5  
God [Amos 3:6](#)
- 3) [Romans 8:28](#)

### **Corrective versus retributive punishments**

#### **From this we learn...**

- Sin is transgression of God's law. Any other definition is an erroneous human invention.
- Sin is not only an act but a state of being.
- The Roman church distinguishes between sins that cause eternal damnation and those that do not but opinions vary as to what are mortal sins.
- Arminians make the same kind of distinction but their definitions also vary and are unclear.
- God's always judges sin either correctively or retributively

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.268-279 in preparation for the next class.





## Lesson 15: Original Sin - pp.268-279

**Purpose:** Show how the sin of Adam effected the human race and the various views concerning that.

### Analysis of Romans 5:12-19

[Verse 12](#)

[Verse 13](#)

### Viewpoints

**Arminian:**

**Roman Catholic:**

**Reformed:**

### From this lesson we learn...

- The doctrine of original sin is held by all branches of Christendom. They vary as to the effect and extent.
- The Reformed view claims the guilt of Adam's sin is attributed to man as chosen and personal.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 246-247 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 16: Total depravity and inability - pp.246-247

**Purpose:** Show the extent of man's fall relative to any ability to contribute to his salvation or to prepare himself for that.

**Total depravity means:**

**Total depravity does not mean:**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

**Good works of the unregenerate**

[See WCF Chapter 16, Art.7](#) on this point.

### Refining definitions

**Total depravity versus utter depravity**

**Total depravity versus total inability**

**From this we learn...**

- The Reformed doctrine of total depravity claims that every faculty of fallen man is affected by sin so that he is unable to will or do anything to contribute to his salvation.
- Total depravity does not mean utter depravity.
- The good works of the unregenerate, however good in themselves, are nevertheless sinful because they proceed from a corrupted source.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 292-299// 230-238// 300-332 in preparation for the next class. Handout, Smalling's [Common logic fallacies regarding free will](#).

## Lesson 17: Covenants – pp.292-299// 230-238// 300-332

**Purpose:** Show how God relates to man by covenants; the differences between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

**Definitions:** A covenant is an agreement between two parties. In the Bible two forms exist.

- *Suntheke:*
- *Diatheke:*

### Covenant of redemption - pp.292-299

Definition:

#### The role of Christ in the covenant of redemption

[Galatians 4:4,5](#)

[Hebrews 7:25](#); [9:14,15](#); [Romans 8:34](#)

[Ephesians 1:22](#) and [Colossians 1:18](#); Colossians 1:13-19; Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:21-23.

### Covenant of works - pp. 230-238

Romans 5:12-19 Notice [Hosea 6:7](#) supports this.

### Covenant of grace - pp. 300-332

The unconditional nature of the covenant of grace: Jeremiah 31:31-33; [32:40](#); 33:20-21.

#### Relationship with the covenant of works

Similarities:

[Deuteronomy 5:3](#)

Differences:

### One covenant or two?

#### One covenant view

[Romans 8:4](#)

## Two covenant view

### Blessings of the covenant of grace

#### In relation to God

- 1) [Romans 5:1](#)
- 2) [Galatians 3:14](#)
- 3) [Hebrews 9:14](#)
- 4) [Matthew 6:33](#)<sup>5</sup>

#### In relation to a community of believers

- 5) [Ephesians 4:16](#); [1Corinthians 12:25](#)
- 6) [Matthew 26:27-28](#); [1Corinthians 10:16](#)
- 7) [1Corinthians 12:11-13](#)

#### In relation to the family

- 8) [Acts 2:39](#); [16:31](#)
- 9) [1Corinthians 7:14](#)

### Summary

The comparisons are not so much between different covenants but between two distinct ways to fulfill the condition. Compare [Romans 2:23](#) with [Leviticus 18:5](#), [Romans 10:5](#), [Galatians 3:12](#).

#### From this lesson we learn...

- God relates to man by covenants. The condition is always perfect obedience.
- The covenant of redemption refers to the agreement among the members of the Trinity regarding the application of salvation to the elect.
- The covenant of works refers to God's promise to grant life because of perfect obedience under the law.
- The covenant of grace refers to God's gracious act of sending Christ to fulfill all the requirements of the law on our behalf.
- Some view the covenants of works and of grace as distinct. Others see one covenant in the Bible since the condition of perfect obedience is required under grace as well.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.102// 352-363// 391-403 in preparation for the next class.

## PART THREE: CHRISTOLOGY

The two natures of Christ; states of humiliation and exaltation; offices; expiation of sin

### Lesson 18: Deity of Christ – pp.102// 352-363// 391-403

**Purpose:** Show the biblical view of the deity of Christ versus early Christian heresies and the relationship between his human and divine natures.

#### Defining the deity of Christ - pp.102

The Nicene Creed defines the deity of Christ as coequal with the Father, of the same essence, attributes, dignity, power and authority. He is not a created God.

In addition, incommunicable attributes are attributed to Christ: omnipresence, [Matthew 18:20](#); omnipotence [Matthew 28:18](#); eternal [Micah 5:2](#); forgives sins, Mark 2:5-8.

#### Deity versus divinity

#### Early errors regarding deity of Christ

**Gnosticism:**

**Docetism:**

**Arianism:**

#### The impersonality of Christ - pp.352-363

What is the relationship between the two natures of Christ?

#### Hypostatic Union

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

This results in a perfect cooperative relationship between deity and humanity.

This means Christ is one personality only, not two personalities in communication with one another. (That view is called Nestorianism, after the fifth century heretic Nestorius.<sup>6</sup>) The evidences for this point are:

- 4) Hebrews 2:14-18.
- 5) [Hebrews 1:6](#)
- 6)

**Liberal view:** Humanity of Jesus became deified. This is the satanic lie of [Genesis 3:5](#).

**Lutheran view:** The two natures are mixed.

Texts refuting the Lutheran view:

- 7) [Colossians 2:9](#) —
- 8) [1Timothy 3:16](#) —
- 9) [1Peter 3:18](#) —

## Kenosis

This theological point is derived from the Greek word in [Philippians 2:6](#) and means *emptying*.

Some aspects of the problem:

Jesus declared his own inability: [John 5:19,30](#); [8:28](#); [14:10](#)

He declared that his words and works are in fact the Father working in him.

## Names of Christ

Jesus:

Christ:

Son of man: [Daniel 7:13,14](#).

**When did Jesus become Christ?**

## Offices of Christ: Prophet, priest and king - pp.391-403

## Theophanies

**From this lesson we learn...**

- The Nicene Creed, 325 A.D., defines the deity of Christ as eternally coequal with the Father and of the same essence and attributes. Anything other than this is heresy.
- In Reformed theology, the two natures of Christ, human and divine are joined but not mixed. This is the hypostatic union. In Lutheran theology, they are mixed.
- The doctrine of *kenosis* deals with the question as to what degree Jesus limited his divine attributes on earth.
- Christ's offices are prophet, priest and king.
- Theophanies refer to supposed appearances of Jesus in the Old Testament.

**Homework reading:** [Nicene Creed Modern Version](#); Berkhof pp.404-441 in preparation for the next class.



## Lesson 19: Atonement - pp.404-441

**Purpose:** Discuss the extent, limitations and benefits of the sacrifice of Christ.

**Atonement:** The appeasement of justice by a sacrifice for wrong committed.

### Concepts involved

Romans 3:21-26; [8:3.4](#); [Colossians 2:14](#); [Galatians 4:4.5](#)

**Covering:** (Hebrew: *Kippur*)

**Propitiation:** (Greek: *Hilasmos*) Romans 1:25; [1John 2:2](#); [4:10](#)

**Redemption:**

**Substitution:**

### Concepts not involved

**Did Christ literally become sin or sinful?**

The verse in [2 Corinthians 5:21](#) does not support this view. Compare with [Hebrews 10:5.6](#).

The Greek term *hamartia*, relative to the sacrifices of the Old Testament in the [LXX](#) is used around 100 times as “offering for sin.”

The offering for sin was holy at all times, including during the sacrifice. [Leviticus 6:25](#)

**The concept of universal redeeming love for all humanity**

### How are the benefits of the atonement applied?

**Catholic:**

**Arminian:**

**Reformed:.** [1John 3:9](#); [5:14](#)

**Conditional substitution versus penal substitution**

## The life of Christ as part of the atonement

In Reformed theology, the entire life of Christ plus his death was an atoning sacrifice.

[Galatians 4:4,5](#)

Compare [Hebrews 5:8,9](#) with [Romans 5:10](#).

## For whom was the atonement made?

**Arminian view:** .

**Reformed view:**

### Arminian arguments refuted

- 1)
  - a) All believers: [3John 12](#); [Acts 17:31](#); [Acts 2:45](#); [1Corinthians 7:7](#); [Romans 16:19](#)
  - b) All present: [Mark 5:20](#); [Acts 4:21](#); [20:26](#)
  - c) People of all kinds: (without exception of class but not without exception of person.) [Mark 1:37](#); [Luke 3:15](#); [John 3:26](#); [13:35](#); [Acts 2:17](#); [21:28](#); [2Corinthians 3:2](#); [2 Timothy 4:16](#); [Titus 2:11](#)
- 2) Texts using the word “world” or “whole world”
  - a) Believers in the world: [Luke 2:1](#); [John 12:19](#).
  - b) Unbelievers in the world: [John 15:18](#); [16:20](#); [17:14](#); [2Peter 2:5](#); [1John 5:19](#); [Revelation 3:10](#); [13:3](#); [16:14](#).

## False theories of the atonement

**Payment to Satan:**

**Recapitulation:**

**Moral influence theory:**

### From this lesson we learn...

- Atonement means the appeasement of wrongdoing by sacrifice.
- In Reformed theology, the atonement of Christ guaranteed and accomplished the salvation of the elect.

- In Arminian theology, the atonement of Christ provided the possibility of salvation for all mankind, depending on how people respond.
- In Reformed theology, the life of Christ was part of the atonement, not his death only.
- Several false theories of the atonement have in common a disregard of the justice accomplished in the sacrifice of Christ.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 495-502 in preparation for the next class.

## PART FOUR: SOTERIOLOGY

### Lesson 20: The role of the Holy Spirit in redemption- pp.495-502

**Purpose:** Identify the personage of the Holy Spirit and his relationship to redemption.

#### The personhood of the Holy Spirit

Note that Peter uses the terms Holy Spirit and God interchangeably. [Acts 5:3-5](#)

**Masculine singular pronoun-** [John 16:8](#)

#### The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

[1Peter 1:10-11](#).

[Psalms 51:11](#)

#### Gifts of the Holy Spirit

See handout by Smalling: [Cessationism versus Continuationism](#)

#### Mystical Union

**The grounds of this union**

**Legally:** See Hebrews 7:11-27.

**Experientially:** [Ephesians 1:13](#)

**Saved by his love?**

#### From this lesson we learn...

- The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity with all the attributes as God.
- The personhood of the Holy Spirit is not mitigated by the use of the neuter pronoun in New Testament Greek. This is an anomaly of language only.
- The Holy Spirit is the member of the Trinity responsible for the union of Christ with his people.

**Homework reading:** Smalling's [Cessationism versus Continuationism](#); Berkhof pp. 477-479 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 21: Saving grace versus common grace – pp.477-479

**Purpose:** Define the difference between common versus saving grace and refute errors concerning them.

### Definitions of saving grace

- Reformed-biblical view:
- Arminian:
- Catholic:

### Common grace

General blessings of God on mankind for the preservation of the race. [Matthew 5:45](#); [Acts 14:17](#); [1Timothy 4:10](#)

#### A danger

#### Catholicism:

#### Refutations

- 1)
- 2) [Acts 13:48](#); [18:27](#); [John 6:44,65](#); [10:26](#)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5) [Ephesians 2:1](#)

#### From this we learn..

- Saving grace, according to the Reformed view, is the active favor of God to the elect only and is irresistible.
- Common grace is the blessing of God on mankind in general that has nothing to do with eternal salvation.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.503-531 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 22: General call versus effectual call - pp.503-531

**Purpose:** Explain the difference between the call of God in general to humanity versus his special call to the elect.

### Definition of effectual call

[Romans 8:30](#), [John 6:44](#)

#### What effectual call does not mean

- That God forces people against their will.
- That God puts people in the position of moral neutrality to decide for themselves independently of God's influence.

### The relationship between effectual call and regeneration

#### General call

John 16:6-8; Acts 7:51,57; Hebrews 6:1-4

[Romans 1:21,24](#)

Romans 1:18-20), the law ([Romans 2:14](#)) and conscience ([Romans 1:15](#)).

#### From this lesson we learn...

- The effectual call refers to God's act of drawing the elect to himself, irresistibly and infallibly.
- The general call is God's command to all mankind to repent, regardless of who is elect. The refusal of the reprobate to respond to this call confirms the justice of God's decree of condemnation.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.547-585 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 23: Faith, justification, security – pp.547-585

**Purpose:** Compare Reformed, Arminian, Catholic and liberal views of faith, justification and security of salvation.

### **Saving faith - pp.547-566**

**Reformed view**

**Catholic**

**Liberalism**

### **Justification - pp.567-585**

**Reformed view**

[Ephesians 2:8,9](#)

**Arminian view**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

**Catholic view**

- 4)
- 5)
- 6)

**What are the practical consequences of justification?**

These consequences are:

- 
- 

**Emphasis on works in James Chapter 2**

**Does this lead to libertarianism?**

[Jude 4](#)

**False faith**

## **Security of salvation**

**Reformed**

**Catholic**

**Arminian**

**Liberal**

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- According to the Reformed view, saving faith is a gift of God for the elect, enabling them to trust in Christ.
- Justification is the declaration by God that a person is righteous because of the righteousness of Christ imputed by faith.
- Faith has counterfeits that can be confused with the real thing, as James Chapter 2 describes.
- Security of salvation in Reformed thinking is based on the promises of God to preserve his people. It is connected to justification and election.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 586-605 in preparation for the next class.



## Lesson 24: Sanctification - pp.586-605

**Purpose:** Define the two meanings of sanctification relative to redemption along with refutation of common errors.

### Two basic ideas in sanctification

**Separation**

**Made holy**

### Distinction between legal sanctification verses experiential

See study on [justification](#).

**Perfectionism – pp.598-600**

[Hebrews 10:14](#) and [Philippians 3:12](#).

[1John 1:8](#)

[2Corinthians 7:1](#)

[1Corinthians 7:32](#)

See Berkhof pp.600-602 for a good refutation of earthly perfectionism.

### Sanctification as a work of grace

- 1) [Philippians 2:12,13](#)
- 2) [Isaiah 26:12](#)
- 3) [Luke 17:10](#)
- 4) [1Thessalonians 5:23,24](#)

### From this lesson we learn...

- The term *sanctification* means primarily “set apart for God’s service,” and secondarily “made holy.”
- Christians have a legal sanctification imputed at conversion but learn to practice holiness throughout life.
- Some movements teach falsely that a Christian can attain to perfect holiness in this life.

- Sanctification, both legally and experientially, is a work of grace.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 458-461; 464-466 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 25: Ordo Salutis – pp.458-461; 464-466

**Purpose:** Explain the biblical order of events in salvation in contrast to erroneous views.

**Definition:** Ordo salutis is Latin for *order of events* in salvation. This point discusses which comes first, faith or regeneration, justification or adoption and such.

### Why is the ordo salutis important?

A correct understanding of:

- The sovereignty of God
- The efficacy of the cross
- Free will
- Security of salvation

### Key point: the relationship between faith and regeneration

Reformed [John 6:44](#)

Arminian

Lutheran

Catholic

### From this lesson we learn...

- Ordo salutis refers to the order of events in salvation.
- All branches of Christendom hold that faith is necessary but differ as to the meaning.
  - Reformed: Saving faith is a gift of grace given to the elect only.
  - Arminian: Saving faith is not a gift of grace but is generated out of the free will of man.
  - Lutheran: Saving faith is a passive non-resistance to the gospel.
  - Catholic: Saving faith is trusting the church to dispense grace by means of sacraments.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 606-613 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 26: Perseverance and preservation - pp.606-613

**Purpose:** Explain the Reformed view of the security of the believer in contrast with Arminian and Baptist concepts.

### Definitions

Perseverance and preservation is the name of the doctrine, divided into two parts.

Perseverance refers to the Scripture injunctions requiring Christians to persevere to the end. Preservation is a gift of grace to ensure that the believer perseveres.

### The paradox in the doctrine of preservation

**How does God preserve his people?**

### Comparison of Arminian and Baptist doctrines

**Arminian**

**Baptist**

**Reformed**

### Evidences for the Reformed view

**Texts showing God preserves his people**

[2Timothy 4:18](#); [1Thessalonians 5:23-24](#); [2Thessalonians 3:3](#); [Jude 24](#); [Psalm 31:23](#); [37:28](#); [97:10](#); [145:20](#); [Philippians 1:6](#); [2Timothy 4:18](#); [1John 5:18](#)

**Doctrines pointing to preservation**

Election, limited atonement, effectual call, the covenant promises, the efficacy of the intercessory ministry of Christ.

The Epistle of 1John infers it is possible for believers to obtain this security. [1John 5:13](#)

**From this lesson we learn...**

- The doctrine of perseverance and preservation means that God grants as a gift of grace to the elect that they will persevere to the end.
- God uses practical means to preserve his people including exhortations, paternal discipline and warnings.
- Arminians hold that a Christian can lose his salvation through mortal sins.
- Baptists hold that a saved person cannot lose his salvation.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 614-615; 626-628; 648-651 in preparation for the next class.

## PART FIVE: ECCLESIOLOGY AND THE MEANS OF GRACE

### Lesson 27: Ecclesiology - pp.614-615; 626-628; 648-651

**Purpose:** Explain the biblical concept of church, the difference between visible and invisible plus the three most common forms of government used.

**Definition: Study of the church**

The term comes from the Greek *ekklesia*: called out. This implies a calling from God to separation from the world.

See various uses of *ekklesia* in Berkhof pp.614-615.

### Visible versus invisible church

[1Corinthians 1:2](#); [Ephesians 5:30](#); [1Corinthians 6:15](#)

#### An erroneous practice

[Matthew 13:30](#)

#### The apostolic rule of charity

[Galatians 4:20](#); [2Corinthians 13:5](#)

### Characteristics of a true church in its visible expression - pp.633-636

The minimum requirements of a true church in Reformed tradition are:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

#### In addition to the above, the ideal is:

- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)

#### When is it proper to leave a church?

- 8) [2Corinthians 6:16,17](#)

9) Galatians 1:8-10

10) [1Corinthians 5:1](#)

### Three kinds of church government

Church government is defined by who has final authority.

**Episcopal - pp.642**

**Congregational - pp.643**

**Presbyterian/Reformed - pp.644-648**

### Pros and cons in each form of government

**Episcopal**

**Congregational**

**Presbyterian**

Positive:

1)

2) [multitude of counselors](#)

3)

Negative:

4)

5)



6)

7)

8)

## Officers of the church

Berkhof distinguishes between ordinary and extraordinary officers.

Elders in [Ephesians 4:11,12](#)

### Extraordinary

Apostles: [Ephesians 2:20](#)

Prophets: [Luke 16:16](#). ([1Corinthians 14:3](#))

Evangelists:

### Ordinary

Evangelist: See above..

Pastor-teacher:

Deacons:

## May women be ordained to any of the church offices?

[1Timothy 3:2](#). See Smalling's essay on [ordination of women](#).

See Smalling's essay on [Deaconesses](#).

**From this lesson we learn...**

- The church may be understood as both visible and invisible:
  - The visible body of believers that meets for worship.
  - All those saved everywhere throughout time.
- A true church is characterized by faithful preaching of the Scriptures, administration of the sacraments and biblical discipline.
- Forms of government can be understood in three categories: Episcopal, Congregational and Presbyterian.
- Church officers can be categorized in two main headings: Elders and deacons.
- The offices of elder are apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor-teacher. Reformed theology views the first two as non extant.
- In historic Reformed theology, women may not hold ecclesiastical offices, although some dispute exists about women holding the office of deaconess.

**Homework reading:** Handout, Smalling's essay on [Deaconesses](#); Berkhof pp.739-743 in preparation for the next class.

## PARTE SIX: ESCHATOLOGY

### Lesson 28: State of man after death - pp.739-743

**Purpose:** Explain the various views of the afterlife in Christianity.

#### **Biblical doctrine of afterlife**

Only two states after death exist: heaven or hell.

- 1) See [Revelation 20:14](#)
- 2) 2Corinthians 5:1-5  
[Revelation 6:9](#)
- 3) See [Revelation 20:12](#); Matthew 25:31,32; [2Corinthians 5:10](#).
- 4)

#### **Errors regarding death**

**Soul sleep - pp.762**

**Annihilation 764-776**

**Universal redemption**

**Purgatory - pp.760**

**Second chance - pp.763**

**Such doctrine is based on false premises:**

- 5) Romans 1:18-20,
- 6) Romans 2:14,15
- 7) See the lesson on [Total Depravity](#).

**From this lesson we learn...**

- The Bible teaches two states of afterlife: heaven and hell (followed by the lake of fire.)
- Catholicism teaches an intermediate state called purgatory. This is not found in Scripture.
- Because of human limitations in perspectives of God's justice, some have been tempted to invent unbiblical views of the afterlife.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp.770 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 29: Eschatological Systems - pp.770

**Purpose:** Explain the main prophetic views regarding the second coming of Christ with the establishment of the visible kingdom of God. Eschatology means the study of end things. Greek: *eschatos*, end.

### Premillennialism - pp.785-798

- Historic premillennialism (Premillennialism of the past)
- Modern premillennialism (Premillennialism of the present)

### The second coming of Christ

#### Pre-tribulation

#### Mid-tribulation

[1Thessalonians 4:16](#) with [Revelation 11:15](#).

#### Post-tribulation

### Post millennial views

#### Post millennialism - pp.794-797

#### Amillennialism

### Problems with premillennialism

[Acts 1:7](#); [Matthew 24:36](#)

Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43 [Daniel 12:2](#); Matthew 25; [John 5:28,29](#); [Acts 24:15](#); Revelation 20.

[Acts 2:16,17](#). See also [Hebrews 1:2](#); [1John 2:18](#).

**Premillennialism claims the reign of Christ is future, not present.**

- 1) [Matthew 4:17](#),
- 2) Luke 17:20,21
- 3) [Luke 12:32](#); [Revelation 11:15](#)
- 4) 1Corinthians 15:24-28
- 5) 2Peter 3:10-13

### **Problems with amillennialism**

Zechariah 14 and certain chapters in Isaiah.

- 6)
- 7) Matthew 11:13-15

### **From this lesson we learn...**

- 

Eschatology is the study of prophecies related to the return of Christ and the establishment of his visible kingdom.

- 

Three categories of views:

- 

Premillennial — Christ will return previous to the 1000 years millennium mentioned in Revelation 20.

- 

Premillennial views, in turn, can be divided into three categories: Pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, post tribulation. The tribulation refers to a supposed period of seven years of apocalyptic judgments.

- 

Postmillennial — Christ will return after the 1000 years millennium.

- 

Amillennial — The millennium is symbolic of the period between the two comings of Christ.

**Homework reading:** Berkhof pp. 814-818 in preparation for the next class.

## Lesson 30: Final states after death – pp.814-818

### The final state of the wicked - pp.816-817

Scripture describes the fate of the unregenerate as eternal torment, popularly called *hell*. [Revelation 20:14,15](#)

[Revelation 20:14](#); [Revelation 14:11](#)

[Mark 9:43](#)

### Final state of the saved - pp.818

[Philippians 1:22,24](#); [2Peter 1:3](#)

Revelation 21:1-4

### Judgment

#### Saved

[Romans 14:10,12](#); [2Corinthians 5:10](#).

1Corinthians Chapter 3.

#### Unsaved pp. 814-817

Revelation 20

[Matthew 11:24](#); [Luke 12:47,48](#); - pp.817

### From this lesson we learn...

- The final state of the saved is the renewed earth after the coming of Christ. The temporary abode is heaven before that event.
- The final state of the unsaved is to be cast into the lake of fire. Hell is the temporary abode until that event.
- All humanity will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The saved will receive their reward and the lost their sentence of eternal condemnation.

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Smalling's books and essays are available at: [www.smallings.com](http://www.smallings.com)

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/891496>

<sup>2</sup> Charnock, Stephen: **EXISTENCE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD**. Baker Books, 1996, Grand Rapids, MI

<sup>3</sup> A view taught by Sabellius, a heretic in Egypt around 215 A.D.

<sup>4</sup> Trench, Richard. **SYNONYMS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 1980. P.241

<sup>5</sup> Excluding, of course, periods of severe persecution.

<sup>6</sup> Nestorius was Bishop of Constantinople, died 450. His views were condemned at the Council of Ephesus, AD 431. He taught that Christ was two persons in one body and therefore two personalities.