

WHY DO WE BELIEVE THAT? Introduction to Reformed Theology

Class 4

Finishing Church History & Covenant Theology

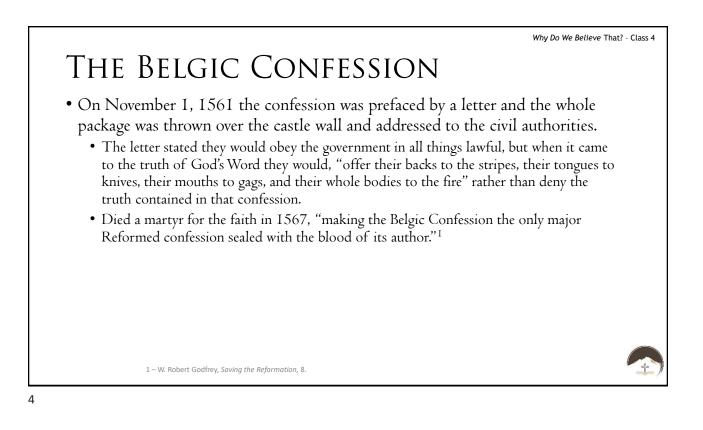
Education Year 2024-2025 Rev. Mark H. Vander Pol

1

Review

- Ancient church councils
 - A lot of work done on Christological and Trinity matters.
- Perversions and distortions of the Gospel
- Medieval Times

Why Do We Believe That? - Class 4 THE BELGIC CONFESSION The Low Countries (Belgium and the Netherlands today) were under the control of King Philip II of Spain. In many cities the Reformed were experiencing terrible persecution and the city authorities were not protecting them, so they were protesting in the streets. They also sang psalms during the protest! The authorities were assuming that all the protests were because the people wanted to overthrow the government—which was the case for the Anabaptists. The Reformed were thrown in the mix with the Anabaptists and not allowed to defend themselves. The pastor of Doornik, Guido de Bres wrote a confession to summarize what the Reformed believed (and would not give up) and what they did not believe (that the government needed to be overthrown).



JACOB ARMINIUS

• A Reformed pastor in the Netherlands and teacher in the University of Leiden

- Began to teach that God doesn't elect individual persons to be saved, but elects a condition: those who would believe in Christ.
- Arminius died in 1609, but his followers took up his mantle and went further in their twisting and denying key truths of the Gospel.
 - They summarized their position in the Five Point of Remonstrance in 1610
- The situation surrounding the Remonstrants was threatening to cause a civil war so the civil government called for the church to take care of the problem.

5

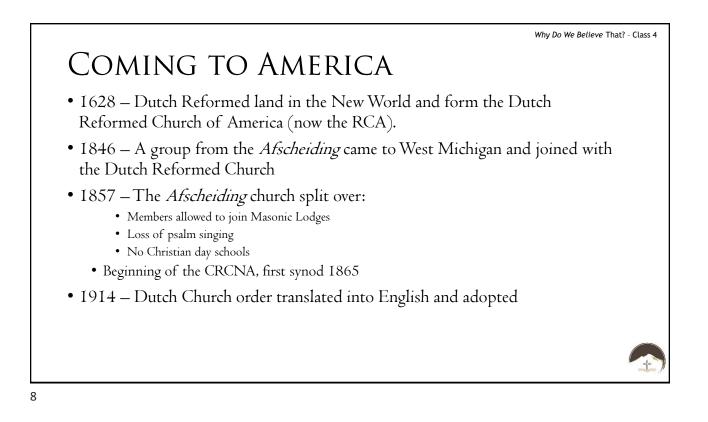
Why Do We Believe That? - Class 4

The Synod of Dort

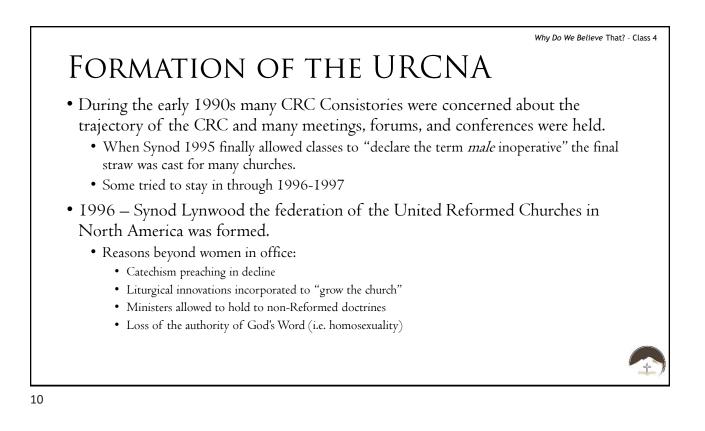
- Not the first synod of the Reformed churches (there had been a number in the Netherlands previously), but this was to be an international synod to overcome any appearance of unfairness against the Arminians.
 - Eight foreign delegations (27 delegates) with 82 total delegates.
 - The French delegates were told by King Louis XIII that if they went they wouldn't able to return to France. The synod left their chairs open in their honor.
- The synod answered the five points of the Remonstrants which is why there are five points.
 - This was never meant to summarize "Calvinism."
 - TULIP (or ULTIP) is great, but not exhaustive.
 - We will take up the Arminian doctrinal positions later.

The Synod of Dort & Beyond

- Also formed a Church Order for the Reformed churches.
 - In 1816, "1618 was reversed" by King William I and made the church governed by the state.
- Later Dutch Church History:
 - 1834 The *Afscheiding* (separation) when five ministers and some families left the church because it wasn't preaching the Reformed truth.
 - 1886 The *Doleantie* (grieving) led by Abraham Kuyper because of the falling away of the state church
 - 1892 Joined with the Afscheiding group
 - 1905 Synod of Utrecht
 - Supralapsarianism vs. Infralapsarianism (supra is permitted)
 - Some other matters: Eternal justification, Immediate regeneration, presumptive regeneration



Why Do We Believe That? - Class 4 STRUGGLES IN THE CRC 1924 – split due to the controversy over common grace, formation of the Protestant Reformed Church 1954 – some PR churches rejoin the CRC 1980s – Some congregations leave over liberal movements and form the Orthodox CRC. 1986 – Other congregations leave for similar reasons and in 1990 adopt the name Alliance of Reformed Churches. 1990-1996 – CRC synods finally settle the issue allowing women into all ecclesiastical offices.



URCNA TODAY

• More on our polity later in the class

- Current stats (as of 12.31.23):
 - 140 churches (including church plants)
 - 25,004 souls
 - 206 ministers (including emeritated)
 - 8 classes



Why Do We Believe That? - Class 4

11

Resources

- "Solo Scriptura", Keith Mathison
- Crisis in the Reformed Churches: Essays in Commemoration of the Great Synod of Dort, 1618-1619, Peter Y. De Jong, Editor
- Saving the Reformation: The Pastoral Theology of the Canons of Dort, W. Robert Godfrey
- William Boekestein has authored three small books on each of the TFU's historical context.

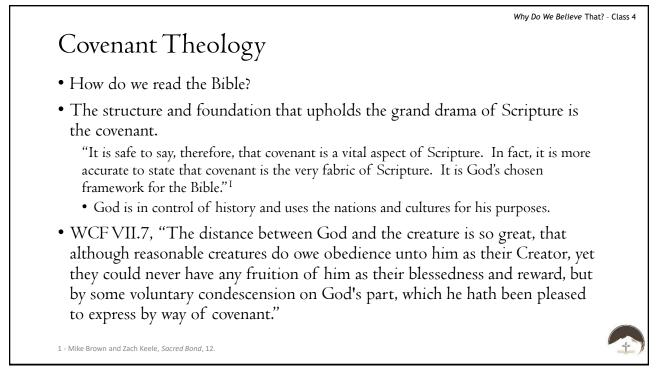


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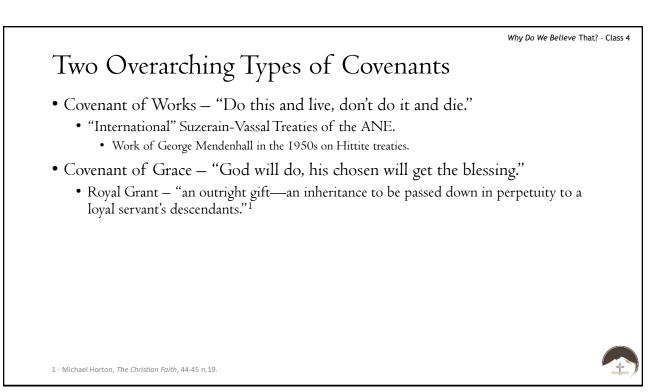
8

Definition of a Covenant

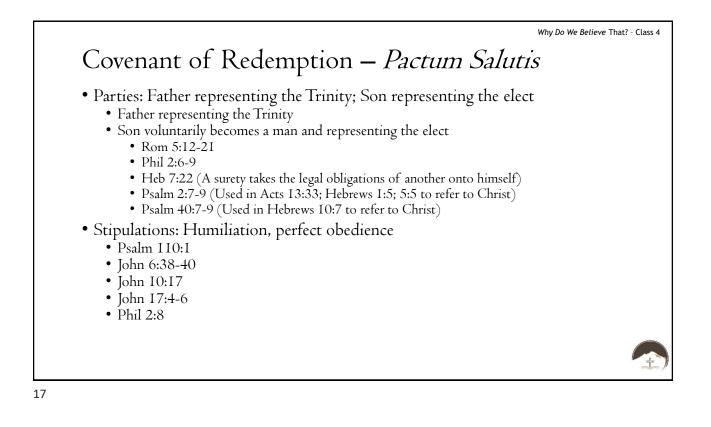
• Covenant – An oath-based union between parties given under stipulations and sanctions.

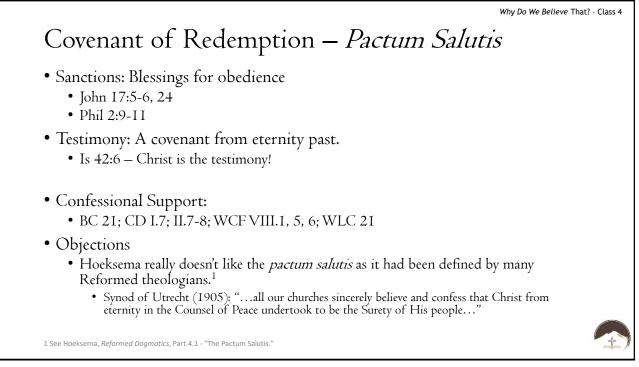
- Parties
- Stipulations
- Sanctions
- Testimony
- Objections to definition
 - Some include the idea of "grace" into the definition of covenant.
 - Hoeksema calls this definition "mechanical"¹
 - "The idea of the covenant is certainly not a pact or agreement... It is the relation of the most intimate communion of friendship in which God reflects his own covenant life in His relation to the creature, gives to that creature life, and causes him to taste and acknowledge the highest good and the overflowing fountain of all good."²
 - Some include the number of parties
 - Some include the shedding of blood

1 – Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 287. 2 – Ibid., 322.

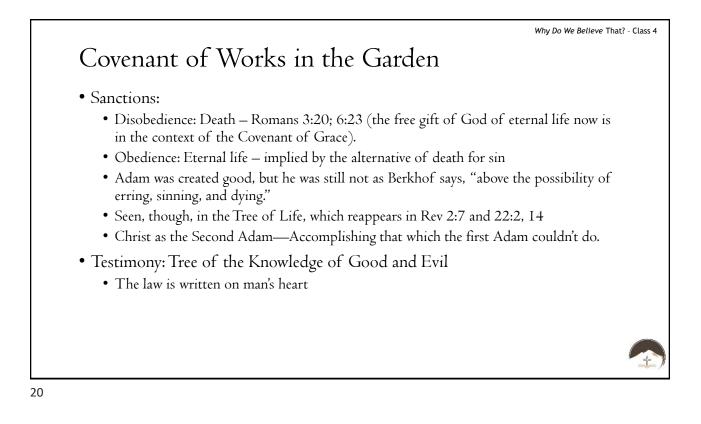








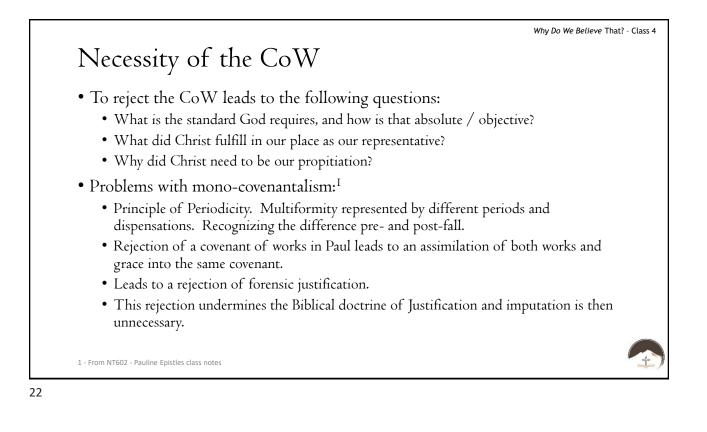
why Do We Believe That? - Class 4 Covenant of Works in the Garden • Parties: God and Man – Gen 2:15-17 • Hosea 6:7 • Stipulations: • "Keep/guard" – – שמר – שמר – שמר , • Used in Gen 3:24 of the cheribum. • Num 3:5-10 – the priests were to guard the sanctuary of God • Adam was to guard the sanctuary of God—kick out the serpent! • Perfect obedience. • Still in effect today – Rom 2:13; Gal 3:12



Covenant of Works in the Garden Different names / terms: Covenant of Life (WSC 12) Covenant of Creation (WSC 12) Commandment of Life (BC 14). Confessional Support BC 14, WCF VII.2; WLC 20-22, 30; WSC 12

- Word בְּרִית (*berit*) is not used. Yeah, well it isn't used in 2 Samuel 7 either!
- Berkhof, "All the element of a covenant [the CoW] are indicated in Scripture; and if the elements are present, we have not only the right, but also the duty to combine them and to give the doctrine so construed an appropriate name."^I

1 - Louis Berkhof, Manual of Christian Doctrine, 130.



Necessity of the CoW

• Not to overgeneralize, but those that have followed a mono-covenantal understanding have led to confusions concerning:

- The Law / Gospel distinction
- Leads to the "New Perspective on Paul": That is, Paul was concerned about "boundary markers" of the covenant community (adhering to "works of the law") and how Gentiles can be included.
- Leads to Federal Vision theology and their teaching of the ability for us to lose our salvation if we are not faithful enough to the covenant (our "covenant faithfulness").

23

Nichael Brown and Zach Keele, *Sacred Bond* Michael Horton, *God of Promise* Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* and *Manual of Christian Doctrine*

Next Week

- Continue with Covenant Theology
- Perhaps start with the Doctrine of Scripture

