



# Session 4

Of God's Eternal Decree, Of Creation, and Of Providence

# Session 4 Overview

- Westminster Confession of Faith
  - Chapter 3 Of God's Eternal Decree
  - Chapter 4 Of Creation
  - Chapter 5 Of Providence
- Catechism
  - **Q. 12. What are the decrees of God? (WSC Q.7)**
  - Q. 13. What hath God especially decreed concerning angels and men?
  - **Q. 14. How doth God execute his decrees? (WSC Q.8)**
  - **Q. 15. What is the work of creation? (WSC Q.9)**
  - Q. 16. How did God create angels?
  - **Q. 17. How did God create man? (WSC Q.10)**
  - **Q. 18. What are God's works of providence? (WSC Q.11)**
  - Q. 19. What is God's providence towards the angels?
  - **Q. 20. What was the providence of God toward man in the estate in which he was created? (WSC Q.12)**



# Supernaturalism

**Supernaturalism:** belief in a supernatural power and order of existence summed in “**Five points of Calvinism**”:

**T - Total depravity:** Man is incapable of saving faith. (Session 5 WCF 6)

**U - Unconditional Election:** God chooses man first for salvation (now)

**L - Limited Atonement:** Christ atonement only for elect (Session 6, 7, 9 WCF 7,8,11)

**I - Irresistible Grace:** Grace applied only to elect. The Grace God gives cannot be refused. (Session 8, 9 WCF 9, 10)

**P - Perseverance of the Saints:** God's elect will persevere and never fall away from the faith. (Session 10 WCF 17)



# Naturalism

**Naturalism:** a theory denying that an event or object has a supernatural significance. The opposite of T.U.L.I.P.

**Free will:** Man has total ability to chose and have faith in God.

**Conditional Election:** Man choses God first then God choses man.

**Unlimited Atonement:** Christs death only makes salvation possible for all.

**Persuasive Grace:** God persuades people to believe by their own free will. Grace can be refused.

**Falling from Grace:** Salvation is based upon man keeping the faith by their own free will.



# The Order of Decrees

|                 |            |                |   |                        |   |                                |   |                   |   |                            |   |                           |   |                           |
|-----------------|------------|----------------|---|------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|-------------------|---|----------------------------|---|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| SUPERNATURALIST | PARTICULAR | Supralapsarian | → | Forordained Everything | → | Creation                       | → | Total Depravity   | → | Definite Atonement         | → | Efficacious Grace         | → | Perserverance of Saints   |
|                 |            | Infralapsarian | → | Creation               | → | Total Depravity                | → | Election of some  | → | Definite Atonement         | → | Efficacious Grace         | → | Perserverance of Saints   |
|                 |            | Amyraldian     | → | Creation               | → | Total Depravity                | → | General Atonement | → | Election of some           | → | Efficacious Grace         | → | Perserverance of Saints   |
|                 | UNIVERSAL  | Lutheran       | → | Creation               | → | Total Depravity                | → | General Atonement | → | Efficacious Grace          | → | Election of some          | → | Conditional/Perserverance |
|                 |            | Universalistic | → | Creation               | → | Total Depravity or Deprivation | → | Election of All   | → | Definite Atonement for All | → | Efficacious Grace for All | → | Salvation of All          |
|                 |            | Weslyan        | → | Creation               | → | Deprivation                    | → | General Atonement | → | Resistable Grace           | → | Election upon faith       | → | Salvation upon Faith      |
|                 | SACERDOTAL | Anglican       | → | Creation               | → | Deprivation                    | → | General Atonement | → | Sacramental Grace          | → | Sacrament works           | → | 2 Sacrament Salvation     |
|                 |            | Roman Catholic | → | Creation               | → | Deprivation                    | → | Sacrament of Mass | → | Sacramental Grace          | → | Sacrament works           | → | 7 Sacrament Salvation     |
|                 |            | Orthodox       | → | Creation               | → | Deprivation                    | → | Sacrament of Mass | → | Sacramental Grace          | → | Sacrament works           | → | 7 Sacrament Salvation     |
|                 | NATURALIST | Semipelagian   | → | Creation               | → | Free Will                      | → | General Atonement | → | Persuasive Gospel          | → | Grace no Works            | → | Once saved always saved   |
|                 |            | Pelagian       | → | Creation               | → | Free Will                      | → | Persuasive Gospel | → | Expiate past sin           | → | All good works            | → | Salvation upon Works      |



# Predestination: The “U” in “T.U.L.I.P.”

**Q. 12.** What are the decrees of God? (WSC Q.7)

**A.** The wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby, **from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass in time,** especially concerning angels and men. (from Acts 2:23, Acts 4:27–28, Rom. 9:22–23)

- The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just **as I have planned so it will stand,** (Isa 14:24 NAS)
- Also we have obtained an inheritance, **having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,** (Eph 1:4-11 NAS)

**Q. 13.** What hath God especially decreed concerning angels and men?

**A. chosen some men and angels to eternal life,** hath passed by and **foreordained the rest to dishonor and wrath.** (Also known as double predestination)

- I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of **His chosen angels.** (1Ti 5:21 NAS)
- What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience **vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?** (Rom 9:22 NAS)



# The Order of Decrees

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|                 |            | Amyraldian     | → | Creation               | → | Total Depravity                | → | General Atonement | → | Election of some           | → | Efficacious Grace         | → | Perserverance of Saints   |
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|                 |            | Roman Catholic | → | Creation               | → | Deprivation                    | → | Sacrament of Mass | → | Sacramental Grace          | → | Sacrament works           | → | 7 Sacrament Salvation     |
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## Q.14. How doth God execute his decrees? (WSC Q.8)

- By the works of **creation** and **providence**, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will.
- **Paradox:**
  - God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and **unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass**: (WCF 3:1)
  - Yet so, as thereby **neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures**; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established. (WCF 3:1)
- **God did not look to the future.** (Illogical)
  - Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, **yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future**, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions. (WCF 3:2)
  - The Terminator, Back to the Future



# Criticisms of Christianity

- Why doesn't God stop bad from happening?
  - And as for you, **you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good** in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. (Gen 50:20 NAS)
- Why doesn't God just get rid of sin?
  - And it shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and **never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh.** (Gen 9:14-15 NAS)
- Why did God create anything in the first place if He knew sin would exist?
  - **All things have been created by Him and for Him.** (Col 1:16 NAS)
  - Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created. (Rev 4:11 NAS)



# Evolutionary Chance?

The physical universe could **not** have come into being **by chance**.

- You can demonstrate **the probability of getting a certain result by flipping a coin to get heads or tails**. The chance of getting heads a 100 times in a row is similar to having 100 left-handed amino acids to form a biological protein. The chance getting 100 left-handed amino acids would have a  $10^{30}$ . Numerically would look like 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000. (The New Answers Book 3, Book 3 By Ken Ham)

**Everything past present and future** was created by God

- **The heavens are Thine, the earth also is Thine; The world and all it contains, Thou hast founded them. The north and the south, Thou hast created them;** Tabor and Hermon shout for joy at Thy name. Thou hast a strong arm; Thy hand is mighty, Thy right hand is exalted. (Psa 89:11-13 NAS)



## Q.15. What is the work of creation? (WSC Q.9)

- **God did “Create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good.”** (WCF 4)
  - **For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth**, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; (Exo 20:11 NAS)
  - **For everything created by God is good**, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; (1Ti 4:4 NAS)
  - **For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth**, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him. (Col 1:16 NAS)
- So **God foreordained everything by creating everything** past, present, and future **and governing His creation.**



# Creation is not a one time incident

**God did not create the world and then set it in motion to govern itself.** God is not somewhere in space watching the world perpetuate itself by its own power.

- Remember what my span of life is; For what vanity **Thou hast created all the sons of men!** (Psa 89:47 NAS)
- This will be written for the generation to come; **That a people yet to be created** may praise the LORD. (Psa 102:18 NAS)
- **Everyone who is called by My name**, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, **even whom I have made.**" (Isa 43:7 NAS)
- "Do we not all have one father? **Has not one God created us?** ... Mal 2:10 NAS)
- For **we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus** for good works, which **God prepared beforehand**, that we should walk in them. (Eph 2:10 NAS)



## Q. 17. How did God create man? (WSC Q.10)

- He **created man male and female**; (Gen 1:27; 5:2; Mat 19:4)
- Formed the body of the **man of the dust of the ground** and the **woman of the rib** of the man. (Gen 2:22)
- Endued them with **living**, reasonable, and immortal **souls**; (Gen 2:7)
- Made them **after his own image**, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; (Gen 1:27; 5:3; )
- Having the **law of God written in their hearts**, (Rom 2:15)
- And power to fulfill it. (??)
- And **dominion over the creatures**; (Gen 1:28)
- **Yet subject to fall.** (Gen. 2:16–17; 3:6)

Behold, I have found only this, that **God made men upright**, but they have sought out many devices. (Ecc 7:29 NAS) and **it was good.**  
(Gen 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31)



# Q. 18. What are God's works of providence? (WSC Q.11)

- **PROVIDENCE:** *1a* often capitalized : divine guidance or care *b* capitalized : **God conceived as the power sustaining and guiding human destiny**  
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/providence>
- **God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures;** ordering them, and all their actions, to his own glory.
  - Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. **But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.** (Mat 10:29-30 NAS)
  - **The steps of a man are established by the LORD;** And He delights in his way. (Psa 37:23 NAS)
  - The One forming light and creating darkness, **Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.** (Isa 45:7 NAS)
  - And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? (Rom 10:14-15 NAS)



## Q.20. What was the providence of God toward man in the estate in which he was created? (WSC Q.12)

### ➤ Placed in Paradise:

- And God blessed them; and God said to them, "**Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over** the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over **every living thing** that moves on the earth. (Gen 1:28 NAS)

### ➤ Instituted the Sabbath:

- Then God blessed **the seventh day** and **sanctified** it, (Gen 2:3 NAS)

### ➤ Covenant of life:

- Then the LORD God took the **man and put him into the garden** of Eden **to cultivate it and keep it**. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "**From any tree of the garden you may eat freely**; but from **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat**, for in the day that **you eat from it you shall surely die.**" (Gen 2:15-17 NAS)  
(This will be discussed in Session 5)

### ➤ Communion with God:

- And they heard the sound of **the LORD God walking in the garden** in the cool of the day (Gen 3:8 NAS)



# The WCF on God's providence

- The immutable **"First Cause"** necessitates a free **"Second Cause."**
  - The **First Cause**, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of **second causes**, either necessarily, freely, or contingently. (WCF 5:2) (see Acts 2:23) (Christ's crucifixion)
- **God works through "Means"** (a course of action or instrument to achieve an end)
  - God, in his ordinary providence, maketh use of **means**, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at his pleasure. (WCF 5:3) (see Isa. 55:10–11; Gen 50:20) (Joseph story)
- God is **not the author of sin** (Paradox)
  - **Not by a bare permission but ... governing of them...to his own holy ends**; yet so, as **the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God**, who... neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin. (WCF 5:4) (see Psa 37:23; James 1:13–14, 17; 1 Joh 2:16)



# The WCF on God's providence cont.

- Gods people oftentimes fall into sin and temptation
  - **Oftentimes leave, for a season, his own children to manifold temptations,** and the corruption of their own hearts...that they may be humbled...just and holy ends. (WCF 5:5) (see Deut. 8:2–3, 5) (Jews wandering in the wilderness) (Session 5)
- Reprobation or the hardening of the heart of sinners (Paradox)
  - As for those **wicked and ungodly men whom God**, as a righteous Judge, for former sins, **doth blind and harden...they harden themselves...** (WCF 5:6) (see Joh 12:40; 2 Thess. 2:11; Exo 4:21; 8:15) (The hardening of Pharaoh's heart) (Session 5)
- God works good through all creature called "Common Grace."
  - As **the providence of God doth**, in general, **reach to all creatures** (WCF 5:7) (see Mat 5:45) (Session 5)



# Creation and Providence of Angels

- Q. 16. How did God create angels?
  - **God created all the angels spirits**, immortal, **holy**, excelling in knowledge, mighty in power, to execute his commandments, and to praise his name, **yet subject to change**. (see Col 1:16; Mat 22:30)
- Q. 19. What is God's providence towards the angels?
  - Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out **to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?** (Heb 1:14 NAS)



# Next Lesson – Session 5

## ➤ Westminster Confession of Faith

- Chapter 6 Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment Thereof

## ➤ Catechism

- **Q. 21. Did man continue in that estate wherein God at first created him? (WSC Q.13)**
- **Q. 22. Did all mankind fall in that first transgression? (WSC Q.16)**
- **Q. 23. Into what estate did the fall bring mankind? (WSC Q.15)**
- **Q. 24. What is sin? (WSC Q.14)**
- **Q. 25. Wherein consisteth the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell? (WSC Q.18)**
- **Q. 26. How is original sin conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity? (WSC Q.17)**
- **Q. 27. What misery did the fall bring upon mankind? (WSC Q.19)**
- Q. 28. What are the punishments of sin in this world?
- Q. 29. What are the punishments of sin in the world to come?