

Survey of the Westminster Confession of Faith



Leadership College – Module 2
 Part 2: The Doctrine of the Confession
 Chapters 2 & 3: Of God, and of the Holy Trinity,
 and Of God's Eternal Decree

Ch. 2 – Of God and of the Holy Trinity

1. There is but one only, living, and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute;

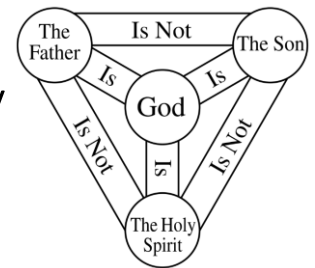
working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory;

most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and withal, most just, and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.

Ch. 2 – Of God and of the Holy Trinity

2. God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself; and is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them. He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them whatsoever himself pleaseth. In his sight all things are open and manifest, his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent, or uncertain. He is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands. To him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience he is pleased to require of them.

Ch. 2 – Of God and of the Holy Trinity



3. In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: the Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.

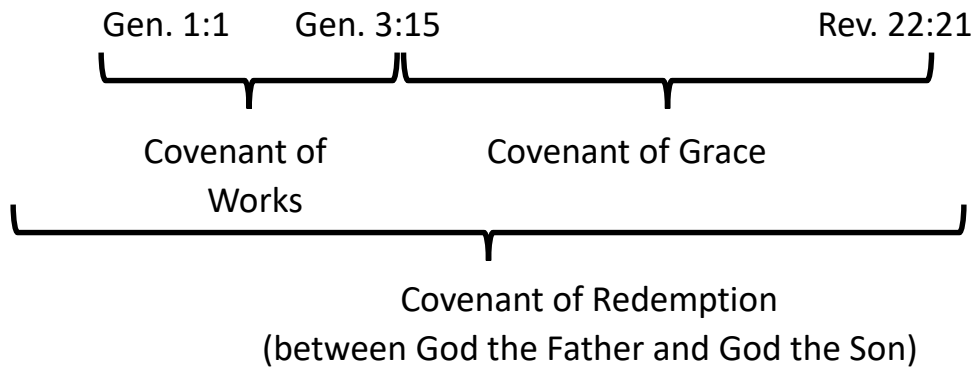
Ch. 3 – Of God’s Eternal Decree

1. God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: 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.

Ch. 3 – Of God’s Eternal Decree

2. 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.

A Covenant Plan



Ch. 3 – Of God’s Eternal Decree

3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death.

Election/Predestination

History of the Doctrine

Augustine, Augustinians, Luther, Melancthon, Bucer, Zwingli

Calvin in his Institutes:

separated Providence and Predestination in 1559 edition

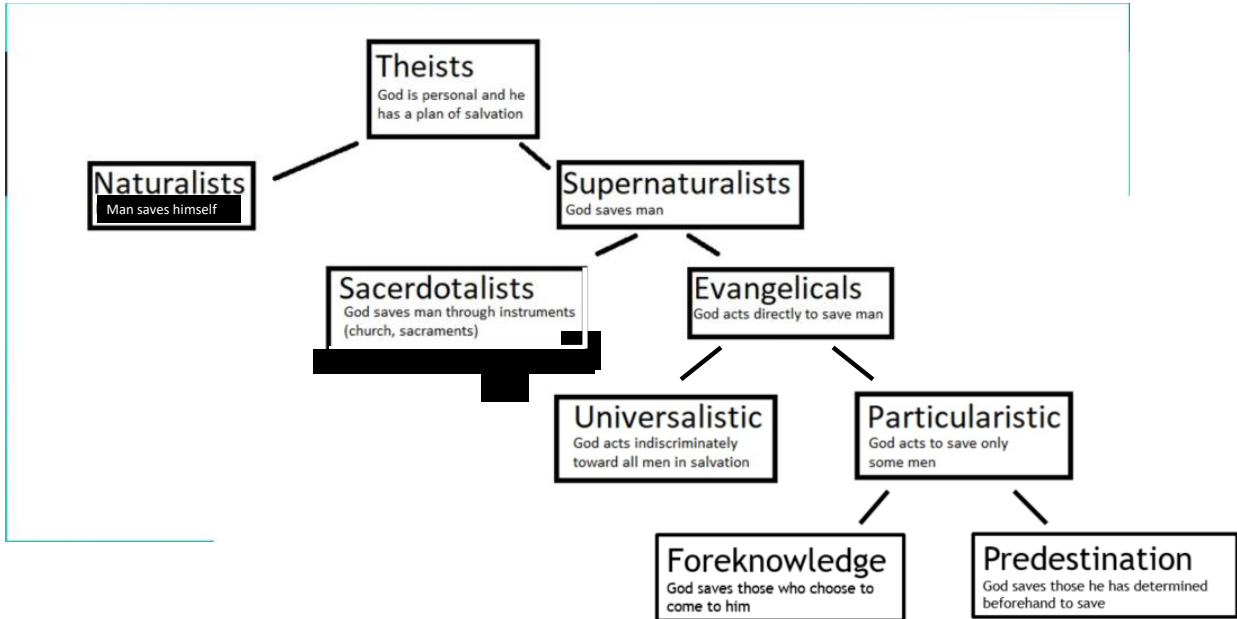
linking it with soteriology –

Election is the way we receive the grace of salvation in Christ

“Election precedes faith as to its divine order, but it is understood by faith.”
(Calvin)

“When you teach free grace and mean it, you are a predestinarian.” (Warfield)

God’s decrees: the very essence of the gospel



Contemplating the Mind of God

Did God's decree (determination) to save a certain people (the elect)

- come before (supra) or
- after (infra) his decree to permit the fall (laps)?

Behind the decrees lies the purpose (glory) of God's intent:

- to create his church from among all mankind, or
- to give grace/salvation to some of all who deserve judgment.

What is the chief end of God in creation?

The Bride of Christ

The New Jerusalem

Infralapsarianism

1. the decree to create the world and (all) men
2. the decree that (all) men would fall
3. the election of some fallen men to salvation in Christ (and the reprobation of the others)
4. the decree to redeem the elect by the work of Christ
5. the decree to apply Christ's redemptive benefits to the elect

Supralapsarianism

1. the election of some men to salvation in Christ (and the utilization and reprobation of the others)
2. the decree to create the world and both kinds of men
3. the decree that all men would fall
4. the decree to redeem the elect, who are now sinners, by the work of Christ
5. the decree to apply Christ's redemptive benefits to these elect sinners

The Order of Decrees								
P A R T I C U L A R	Supralapsarian	→ Election of some	→ 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	
U N I V E R S A L	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	
S A C E R D O T A L	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	
N A T U R A L I S T	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	
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Ch. 3 – Of God’s Eternal Decree

4. These angels and men, thus predestinated, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

Ch. 3 – Of God’s Eternal Decree

5. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

Ch. 3 – Of God’s Eternal Decree

6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

Ch. 3 – Of God’s Eternal Decree

7. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.

Ch. 3 – Of God’s Eternal Decree

“Predestination undercuts all confidence in work righteousness and lays bare the source of human salvation. It is the negation of all merit and places salvation solely in the mercy of God. It means that salvation is rescue and not achievement. ... Predestination was Calvin’s most emphatic way of saying that justification is the work of God’s grace. Just as justification by faith through grace was Luther’s most emphatic way of saying the same thing.”

(J. Leith)

Ch. 3 – Of God’s Eternal Decree

8. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men, attending the will of God revealed in his Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.

