

Class 4: Anthropology

The trouble with people...

“Why am I always at war with myself? Why have I told, as if upon compulsion, what I knew all along I ought to have withheld? Why am I making a friend of this woman beside me, in spite of the whispers against her that I hear in my heart”

-Charles Dickens, “Our Mutual Friend”

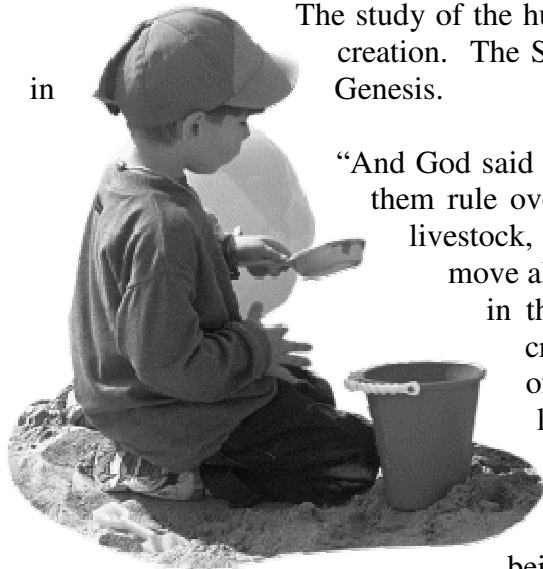
“Now he found out a new thing--namely, that to promise not to do a thing is the surest way in the world to make a body want to go and do that very thing.”

-Mark Twain “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer”

“For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate”

-Paul, Romans 7:15

THE CREATION



The study of the human condition, and our position before God starts with creation. The Scriptural account of the origin of humanity is contained in Genesis.

“And God said ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.... And the Lord formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.” (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:8)

This account tells us several things about human beings.

Created as Body and Soul

As God created us, He created us in a way different from that which He used to create the rest of creation. God spoke the rest of the universe into creation. God created man from the dust of the earth, and in that way we are tied to the physical realm of creation. But God went on to breathe into man the breath of life. So to his earthiness God added something absolutely different - a soul. Therefore, man has **a body and a soul**. One is material, the other non-material; the one is physical, the other spiritual. These two form a unity, and cannot be separated during life. This unity is important, because as we will see, when God acts to redeem us, He **redeems the whole person**.

Some would add a third element to human beings - a spirit. This view that we are body, soul and spirit is called trichotomy, but is not clearly taught in Scripture, and is not favored by many theologians. (R.C.Sproul, Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, p. 134; Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, p.250-1; Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 193.)

Created in the Image of God

Man was also created in the **image of God**. What does it mean that man was created in the image of God? Our likeness to God includes our intellectual and moral nature. God is a spirit and the human soul is a spirit. We were created with **immortality, intellectual power and moral freedom**. These attributes of a spirit distinguish us from the rest of creation, and make us capable of communion with our maker. If we were not like God in these respects, we could not know God.

The creation of our first parents as moral free agents meant that they originally **had the power to obey God or the power to disobey**. The decision to obey or to disobey was constantly before

our first parents, as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil stood in the center of the garden. The decision to obey or disobey God stood in the center of the lives of Adam and Eve, where they passed by it every day. That same decision to obey or disobey stands at the center of our lives.

The situation after creation and before the Fall is summarized in the Westminster Confession as follows:

Westminster Confession (ch. 4, para 2): “After God made all the other creatures, He created man, male and female, with reasoning, immortal souls. He endowed them with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness in His own image and wrote His law in their hearts. God also gave them the ability to obey His law and the potential to disobey it; i.e., He gave them the freedom of their own will, which could change. In addition to this law written on their hearts, they were commanded not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. As long as they obeyed God’s law and kept this commandment, they were happy in fellowship with God and had dominion over the other creatures.”

God’s Purpose in Creation

Why did God create human beings? What is our purpose in life? The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 1 says “the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

THE FALL



Eventually, of course, Adam and Eve chose to disobey God and eat of the forbidden fruit. The immediate consequences of the disobedience of Adam and Eve were: (a) a sense of guilt and shame; (b) a desire to hide themselves from God; (c) brokenness in the relationship between the man and the woman; (d) God’s righteous judgment on the serpent, the man and the woman, tempered by grace; and (e) expulsion from the garden.

Why did Adam and Eve choose to disobey God? We do not know. We know that the first step of Satan was to cause Eve to question God’s word (“You will not surely die”), and then to suggest that if they ate of the fruit, they would be like God. Nevertheless, it is hard for us to understand why they made the choice they did. However, we do know that God is never the author of sin, and therefore, man’s sin was not God’s fault.

Many who read the Scriptures would like to spiritualize the story of the Fall, to treat it as an allegory. There are other stories in the Bible, such as the parables, clearly intended to be taken as spiritual truth, not historical truth. Can the Fall not be an allegory? Did we really have

ancestors who disobeyed? Did their actions really affect us? As we will see, the effect of Adam and Eve's disobedience on humanity has been debated for centuries.

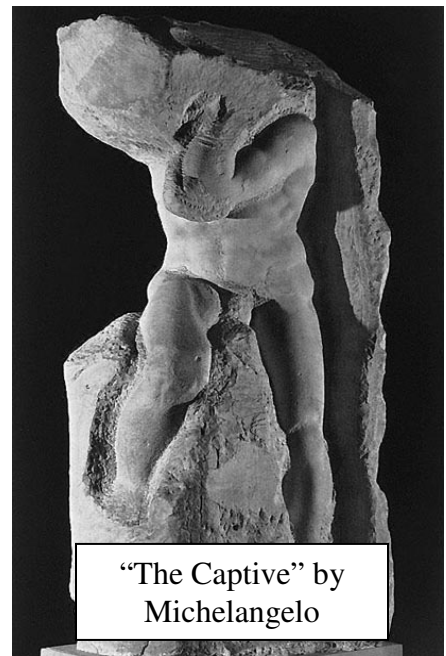
We will note that there is substantial scientific evidence for the premise that all of humankind has a common female ancestor, and so far scientists are unable to either confirm or deny a common male ancestor. (John Tierney, Linda Wright and Karen Springen, "The Search for Adam and Eve," Newsweek, January 11, 1988; Nancy Shute, "Where We Come From," U.S. News & World Report, January 29, 2001). We can also observe that the world around us is plagued by the universality of sin, and therefore conforms to the description of a world suffering from the effects of the Fall. Most importantly, we should observe that the rest of Scripture assumes the account of Genesis to be historical fact, and that the Fall underlies the whole doctrinal system revealed in the Scriptures.

THE EFFECTS OF THE FALL - TOTAL DEPRAVITY

What were the effects of the Fall? This has been a subject of debate going back to at least the Fifth Century. At that time, an English monk named Pelagius taught that, although Adam and Eve were affected by their sin, the human race thereafter was not affected. Augustine, about whom we read in the church history section of this study, opposed Pelagius, and Pelagius' view has since been treated as heretical. Later, however, the same debate raged in a modified form between the supporters of Calvin and the supporters of a Dutch teacher named Arminius. Reformed theology followed Calvin, and Arminius passed his viewpoint to his followers, the "Arminians." We will discuss this debate over the next few lessons, especially in the lesson on Soteriology. The debate focuses on the spiritual health of the human race after Adam, and has some very practical implications for the church and society as a whole, particularly touching the church's approach to evangelism and social welfare.

Both Reformed and Arminian thinkers agree that the results of the Fall reached beyond Adam and Eve to us today, and that their actions lead to the sinful nature of all succeeding generations. However, Reformed theology says that we are born with a radically fallen nature, which we inherited from Adam, and we are totally unable to please God on our own. God must intervene to save us. Arminians believe that although the Fall was serious, we still have sufficient good left to seek after God. Let us first understand the Reformed position.

You will remember that Adam had the ability to obey or the ability to disobey God. However, after Adam's fall, he no longer had the ability not to sin. The Bible also says that when Adam fell, he fell as our representative. Adam acted as the representative of the entire human race. He was placed in the Garden to act not only for himself, but also for all his future descendants. His sin is ours by imputation. That means that we also no longer have the ability not to sin.



Two terms are helpful here. Adam is referred to as our **“federal head.”** Just as a federal government has a chief spokesman who speaks and acts for the entire nation, so Adam spoke and acted on our behalf.

“Imputation” is the idea that we are attributed with credit or responsibility for the acts of another. Those of you in accounting know the term “imputed interest,” where related parties borrow and loan money at below-market rates. One party may have interest imputed for tax purposes, even though it was not really paid, because it is fair that that party pay tax on the loan as if the interest had been paid. We will see that the imputation of Adam’s sin to us works to our terrible detriment; however, another imputation works to our wonderful benefit.

When the Fall took place, not only was Adam forced to earn his living by the sweat of his brow, we were, too. Not only was Eve forced to experience pain in childbirth; all women after her experienced that same pain. In fact, the whole universe suffered, “for we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.” (Romans 8:22). We see the universality of a sinful nature in human beings through the actions of people around us.

The New Testament explicitly teaches that we suffer as a result of Adam’s sin. In Romans 5, for instance, Paul says, “Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin... By the one man’s offense, many died...Through one man’s offense, judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation...Through one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.” (Romans 5:12, 15, 18, and 19).

Most importantly, through Adam our basic natures changed. We became corrupt and polluted in all aspects of our lives. The theological term for this is **“total depravity.”** There is no part of us left untouched by sin. Our minds, our wills, our senses and our bodies are affected by the Fall. We have impure thoughts, speak sinful words and do sinful deeds. Because we are sinners, we sin. The Westminster Confession again expresses it well:

Westminster Confession (ch. 6, para 2-4): “By this sin they [Adam and Eve] fell from their original righteousness and fellowship with God, and so became dead in sin and completely polluted in all their faculties and parts of body and soul. Since Adam and Eve are the root of all mankind, the guilt for this sin has been imputed to all human beings, who are their natural descendants and have inherited the same death in sin and the same corrupt nature. This original corruption completely disinclines, incapacitates and turns us away from every good, while it completely inclines us to every evil. From it proceeds all actualized sins.”



We must be careful to note that there is a difference between total depravity and utter depravity. After all, we could be worse. We are not as wicked as we could possibly be. I look good compared to Adolph Hitler, and even Hitler probably loved his mother.

However, God does not grade on a curve. While I may look good compared to someone else, I do not measure up to God's standard, which is absolute perfection. After all, God measures both my actions and my motivations for them. Rarely, if ever, do I do anything purely to please God. Almost always I have my own interests at least partly in view.

Some people favor the term "radical depravity" to express this idea, because "radical" comes from the word "radix," or "root." We are not corrupted as badly as we could be. However, we are corrupted at root.

The person who does not know Christ cannot please God. Because of this radical corruption, the verdict of Scripture falls: "There is no one righteous, not one." (Romans 3:10); "They are altogether unprofitable." (Romans 3:12); we are "dead in our trespasses and sins." (Ephesians 2:1); we are "sold under slavery to sin." (Romans 7:23) and we are "by nature children of wrath." (Ephesians 2:3)

Total depravity is utterly repugnant to modern, educated ears. For 200 years in Western Culture, we have been taught that the Christian doctrine of original sin - our hopelessness, sinfulness, and lost condition apart from Christ - is incomprehensible nonsense. For instance, the enlightenment thinker Rousseau taught that children are born innocent and unstained, not in original sin. He believed that children come into the world perfect and are eventually corrupted by families, education, culture and society. While his ideas have taken root in our culture, the events of the 20th century have shown the depths of which humankind is capable. We have seen two World Wars which wiped out tens of millions of people, the rise of brutal dictators like Stalin, Mao, Hitler, and Pol Pot, devastating acts of genocide such as what occurred in Rwanda and the Balkans in the 90's, and the rise of global terrorism. After a century of blood, most everyone now recognizes that Rousseau and the Enlightenment were wrong in their view of human nature.

Randall Gerald: "“Most of us know now that Rousseau was wrong, that man, when you knock his chains off, sets up the death camps. Soon we will know everything the 18th century didn't know about human capacity for selfishness, greed, and violence.”"

Allen Jacobs: "Modern culture says it has left behind Christianity's repulsive doctrine of original sin but it also says that it has left Rousseau's naiveté about human nature behind. So where the hell are we?"

We can't have our cake and eat it too. Every time we rail against the seemingly repulsive doctrine of original sin, we are forced to look at the facts and our objections are repelled. Alexander Solzhenitsyn did not believe in original sin until he was put into the gulag. Without this doctrine, culture, history, society, and even we ourselves become incomprehensible.

The Reformed position takes seriously the idea that we are spiritually dead. We are unable to help ourselves until God awakens us from death. This radical corruption leaves us enemies of God, dead in our sins, totally unable to please Him. It is no longer in our natures to seek to

please God. We are as dead spiritually as Lazarus was dead physically before Christ called him from the grave.

Fortunately, God has not left us in this wretched condition. For we will see that for those whom He has called, there is another imputation, one of righteousness that is received by grace through faith. For God imputed our sins to Jesus Christ, and has imputed to us His righteousness.

The Question of Free Will

Some will object that if our will has been corrupted by sin, we no longer have free will. However, Reformed thinkers consistently affirm free will, even while also affirming that unregenerate men will never choose to please God.

What is free will? Essentially, exercising free will is doing that which we want to do. Free will is the exercise of our strongest desires. Free will is acting on what we want most and everyone has a reason for the choices made. It is not a violation of free will to have a motive for a choice. In Alice In Wonderland, Alice came to a fork in the road. She did not know whether to turn to the left or the right. She saw the grinning Cheshire cat in the tree. She asked the cat, “Which way shall I turn?” The cat replied, “Where are you going?” Alice answered, “I don’t know.” “Then,” replied the Cheshire cat, “it doesn’t matter.” (Application to the issue of free will from R.C. Sproul, Chosen By God, p.52)

No one would object if Alice had a reason for choosing one direction over the other. Without a reason for her actions, she would never have moved. **Free will is not violated when we have a reason for that which we want to do.** In fact, that is the very essence of free will - doing what we want to do. We always choose according to our strongest instinct at the moment. Following this instinct, from wherever derived, is the heart and soul of free will. After the Fall, we still continue to have the ability to follow our strongest instinct. It is no denial of free will to say that after the Fall, I have a reason for choosing to follow my own way rather than God’s.



Free will must also be exercised within certain limits. We are not free to fly as birds fly. Birds are free to fly, but (to our knowledge) not free to do advanced mathematical calculations. No matter how I might wish to do so, I am not free to change my skin pigmentation. Freedom is always exercised within limits. **Free will is not violated when my freedom is exercised within limits.** The Bible asserts my freedom, but within limits. We are free, but our nature is not inclined to pursue God – indeed my nature is hostile to God. We need the

initiative of God to free us from that nature.

THE EFFECT OF THE FALL - THE COVENANT OF WORKS AND THE COVENANT OF GRACE

There was another change in our relationship to God, which took place with the Fall. Man's relationship to God has been governed by the covenants God initiated. Before the Fall, Adam stood under the Covenant of Works. After the Fall, God introduced a Covenant of Grace, which is still in effect today.

Covenants

God's relationship to His people has been governed by covenants. Covenant is a seldom-used concept today. To most people, the word has the connotation of a serious agreement, but most people could not distinguish a covenant from a contract.

A **covenant** is a **bond in blood**. When two people enter into a covenant, they pledge their lives, their families, their property and all else they have to each other, to defend each other to the death. Covenants for mutual defense were commonplace. The Hebrew word used to describe entering into a covenant is the word "berit," which literally means to "cut" a covenant. A covenant was often solemnized by cutting an animal, symbolizing that if one party were to fail in the covenant, may he be cut and his blood flow like the blood of the animal. Other ways of solemnizing a covenant might include the exchange of family members, the exchange of possessions or the eating of a covenant meal together.

We have the written record of some covenants entered into between political parties in the Middle East. The usual elements of these political covenants included (1) a statement of the parties to the covenant, (2) the historical background to the agreement, (3) the agreements to be kept by each side, (4) a list of witnesses to the agreement, and (5) blessings and curses for keeping or breaching the agreement. That God would enter into a covenant relationship with us shows His love and concern for us.

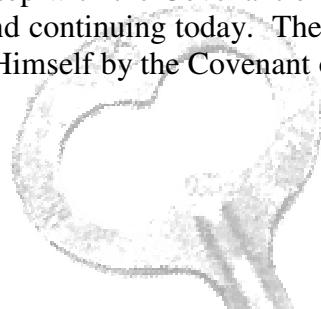
The Covenant of Works

To establish His relationship with man, God entered into the **Covenant of Works** with Adam. God did not overtly state that this was a covenant, as He did later with some of Adam's descendants. The word "covenant" is not used in connection with God's dealings with Adam. Nevertheless, the elements of a covenant are present in God's dealings with Adam.

God established the covenant, requiring that Adam and Eve live in perfect and total obedience to Him. He promised eternal life as the blessing of obedience, but also established death as the penalty for disobeying. We have discussed the event of the Fall above. When Adam disobeyed, he subjected not only himself, but also all his offspring to the penalty of death for disobeying the Covenant of Works.

The Covenant of Grace

However, God did not stop with the Covenant of Works. God established a Covenant of Grace, beginning with Adam and continuing today. The story of redemptive history is the story of God calling his redeemed to Himself by the Covenant of Grace.



We see the first steps taken by God to establish a Covenant of Grace in Genesis 3, immediately after Adam and Eve had fallen. Although they deserved to die under the Covenant of Works, God graciously spared them. Further, God promised them a redeemer who would crush the head of the serpent.

God established the Covenant of Grace, and continued to clarify it throughout the Old Testament. The Covenant of Grace is summarized by God's pledge, "I will be your God and you will be my people." By the Covenant of Grace, God delights in redeeming His people without condition.

God entered into the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15 and 17, by which God told Abraham that he would have a son, he would be a blessing to many nations and that he would have a land. This covenant was to run between God and Abraham and Abraham's descendants. This covenant was initiated by God by His grace, certainly not because Abraham deserved such promises.

The covenant was reaffirmed when God led the people out of Egypt, and when Moses gave the people the Law. You will remember that after the Law was given, Moses sprinkled blood on the people, solemnizing the covenant. (Exodus 24:1-8). The book of Deuteronomy contains the blessings for obeying and the curses for disobeying the Law. (Deuteronomy 28). With the Law, God also graciously gave Israel the sacrifice to permit their cleansing and forgiveness when they disobeyed.

God's covenant revelation continued to David. Even though David was guilty of sin with Bathsheba and Uriah, God graciously made an "everlasting covenant" with David (II Samuel 23:5) by which God promised that a descendent of David would always be the ruler of the kingdom (II Samuel 7).

In all, there are 290 references to the Covenant in the Old Testament. The people of Israel clearly understood themselves to stand in unique relationship to God because of the covenant He had initiated with them.

The Covenant of Grace continued into the New Testament. Second Corinthians and Hebrews speak about the covenant's fulfillment. Paul writes in Romans 11 that the Gentiles, as wild branches, have been grafted into the olive tree that was Israel. By this ingrafting, the Gentile believers enjoy the benefits of the covenant previously offered only to the Jews. The covenant is even more gracious in the New Testament, and available to even more people. But it is essentially the same covenant as the Covenant of Grace in the Old Testament.

But what about the original Covenant of Works? Was it ever fulfilled? What about the punishment of death that Adam deserved? Did God just forget about the penalty that went with Adam's disobedience?

GOD'S GRACE ON THE CROSS -- THE ANSWER TO ADAM'S FALL

God answered our needs at the cross. We will discuss the work of Christ at the cross in greater detail later. But the cross answers our need for a nature renewed from our total depravity by a double switch. And the cross was the place where Adam's sin was punished, the Covenant of Works was fulfilled and we could be promised the benefits of the fulfilled Covenant.

Imputation and the Wondrous Double Switch

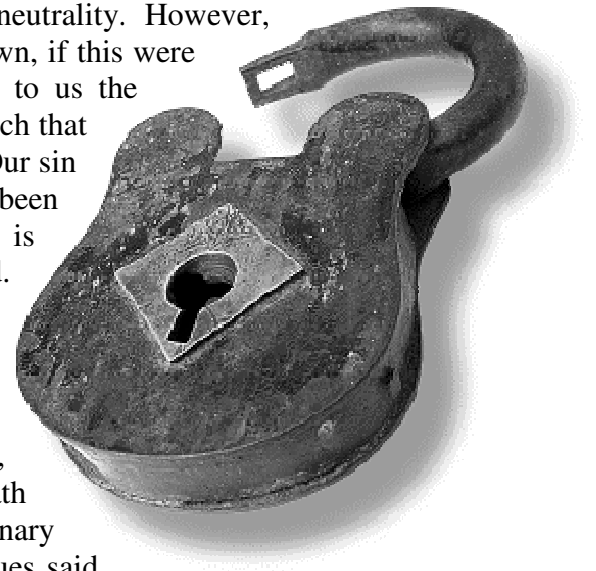
We discussed the imputation of Adam's sin to us, and the change in our natures that resulted. If the only imputation were that of Adam's sin to us, we would be left in our state of radical corruption, separated from God and without hope. However, God has not stopped there.

God went on to make available to us two further imputations, discussed in Romans 5. First, on the cross, God imputed the sins of believers to His son, Jesus Christ, and Christ paid all of the debt for those sins. By the cross we are free from the debt we owe God. We are then restored from our great debt to God for our sins to a position of moral neutrality. However, we still would not have any merit, any righteousness of our own, if this were the only imputation made by God. But God also imputes to us the obedience, the righteousness of Christ. This is the double switch that takes place at the cross, and our acceptance of God's grace. Our sin has been imputed to Christ and Christ's righteousness has been imputed to us. This is what gives us merit before God. It is totally by the merit of Christ that we are righteous before God. It is by this double switch that God declares us righteous in His sight.

We have earlier talked about J. Gresham Machen. On New Year's Eve, 1936 in a Roman Catholic hospital in Bismarck, North Dakota J. Gresham Machen was one day away from death at the age of 55. It was Christmas break at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia where he taught New Testament. His colleagues said he looked "deadly tired," but instead of resting, he took the train from Philadelphia to the 20-below-zero winds of North Dakota to preach in a few Presbyterian churches at the request of pastor Samuel Allen. He had pneumonia and could hardly breathe. The following day, New Year's Day, 1937, he mustered the strength to send a telegram to John Murray, his friend and colleague at Westminster. It was his last recorded word: "I'm so thankful for [the] active obedience of Christ. No hope without it." He died that evening.

Machen was right to place his hope in the active obedience, the righteousness of Christ. Christ has been perfectly obedient, even to death on a cross. Christ's perfect righteousness has been imputed to the account of J. Gresham Machen, to my account and to the account of every believer. There is no hope without the active obedience of Christ, reckoned to me as righteousness in my account.

The Fulfillment of the Covenant of Works



It is also by the cross that the Covenant of Works is fulfilled. Christ has been perfectly obedient, thus fulfilling all that God commanded in the Covenant of Works. Christ is the one whose blood is spilled, instead of the blood of Adam, and instead of the blood of you and me as punishment for our failure to be perfectly obedient to God. Jesus has taken the punishment that Adam deserved, and that we deserve for breaking the Covenant of Works, in our place. This is what Jesus meant when he said at the Last Supper, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 24:20) When Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us at the cross, in God’s view we have also fulfilled the obligations of the Covenant of Works. We are therefore given the eternal life promised for perfect obedience to God.

A new nature and eternal life, won for us by Jesus on the cross. Praise God for His wonderful work on our behalf!

Additional resources:

O. Palmer Robertson, Covenants, Great Commission Publications, 1987

O Palmer Robertson, Christ of the Covenants, P & R. Publications, 1980

R.C. Sproul, Chosen By God, Tyndale House Publishers, 1986

R.C. Sproul, Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, Tyndale House Publishers, 1992

Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Abridged Version, P&R Publishing, pp. 239-319, 337-350, 1992

Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, pp. 181-301, 1996

ANTHROPOLOGY QUESTIONS

- 4-1. What does the Bible say was the origin of man? What does this tell us about the nature of humanity?
- 4-2. What does the Bible teach about the relationship of the two parts of man? What is the implication for redemption?
- 4-3. What does it mean that man was created in the image of God?
- 4-4. What is God's purpose for men?
- 4-5. What were some of the immediate effects of the Fall?
- 4-6. What is total depravity?
- 4-7. What does it mean that Adam acted as "federal head" for humanity?
- 4-8. What are the effects of the imputation of Adam's sin to us?
- 4-9. What is a covenant?
- 4-10. What was the Covenant of Works?
What was its condition?
What was its promise?
What was its penalty?

4-11. Summarize the Covenant of Grace.

4-12. What is the relationship of the Covenant in the Old Testament to the Covenant in the New Testament?

4-13. How do we become righteous in God's view?

4-14. What is "imputed righteousness"?

4-15. Does our salvation depend upon obedience to the Law?