

Doctrine of God

I. The Essential Nature of God

- A. Knowledge of God – man cannot fully comprehend God but it does not follow that we cannot have any knowledge of him..
- B. Knowledge of God as known from special revelation – God is spirit who is of infinite perfections. We can't define God but only talk about him generally.

II. The Attributes of God

- A. Incommunicable attributes – these emphasize the absolute distinction between God and the creature
1. *Independence, Immutability, Infinity, Simplicity*
- B. Communicable attributes – these are found in some resemblance in man. But we see them only in a finite, imperfect way. *Knowledge, Wisdom, Goodness, Love, Grace, Mercy, Long Suffering (Rom 2:4) Holiness, Righteousness, Veracity*

III. The Trinity

- A. The Doctrine stated – Augustine, “The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one, the Holy Trinity himself.” God exists in three persons but not persons in the ordinary sense, there are three modes or forms in which the divine being exists. But, they are of such a nature that they can enter into personal relations. The mystery is that each person possesses the whole of the divine essence, and this has no existence outside or apart from the three persons. No person is subordinate but there seems to be order: F1S2HS3, an order reflected in their work.
- B. The Father – 1st person. The distinctive characteristic of the Father is that he generates the Son from all eternity.
- C. The Son – 2nd person. He is eternally begotten of the Father. His work is seen in mediation, of creation and redemption.
- D. The Holy Spirit – 3rd person. His special characteristic is that he proceeds from the Father and the Son by spiration. His work is to bring things to completion.

IV. The Works of God

- A. Predestination – God's plan and purpose for his creatures dealing mostly with salvific issues. It has two parts, election and reprobation. It includes men, angels, and devils.

V. Creation

- A. parallel days – 1. Creation of light = 4. Creation of light-bearers; 2. Creation of expanse and separation of waters = 5. Birds and fishes; 3. Separation of waters and dry land, and preparation for man's habitation = 6. Beasts, fields, cattle, all creeping things, man.

VI. Providence

- A. Divine providence – that work of God in which he preserves all his creatures, is active in all that happens, and directs things to their appointed end.

PROVIDENCE

Joan DeVries

LD # 10 of Heidelberg Catechism

Q 27 What do you understand by the providence of God?

A. Providence is the almighty and ever present power of God by which he upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty—
all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but from his fatherly hand.

Belgic Confession Article 13: The Doctrine of God's Providence

We believe that this good God, after he created all things, did not abandon them to chance or fortune, but leads and governs them according to his holy will, in such a way that nothing happens in this world without his orderly arrangement.

Yet God is not the author of, nor can he be charged with, the sin that occurs.....

Calvin I.xvi.2 "Suppose a man falls among thieves... or.. is killed by a falling tree or house. Suppose another man miraculously escapes death by a finger's breadth. Carnal reason ascribes all such happenings, whether prosperous or adverse, to fortune. But anyone who has been taught by Christ... will look farther afield for a cause, and will consider that all events are governed by God's secret plan.

CLASS NOTES: God's influence on human relations

"Actualization":

- Decree 1. Strongest (Hardest): God is the Cause of an event or action (impulsion) ie. He causes faith to spring up. agent
- Precept 2. Softer Relation God ordains decrees, deliberates, plans, wills, purposes, intends, determines etc.....
- Allow 3. Weaker (softer) God foresees as a spectator.
- 4. Weakest (softest) God overlooks or ignores.

Evil events may be ordained by God for his greater purpose, but he does not cause evil. The problem with the HC is that it implies that God has the same relation in good OR evil. Yet the BC makes clear that we cannot say that God authors evil. Evil does fit under God's providence, but in a weaker sense. He may ordain it, but he doesn't cause it.

Decree vs. Precept

SO in regard to evil, reject #1.
Allow #2. "Permit" can be used under #2.
So #3 is also true, but #4 is false in all regards.

Plantinga says Calvin is unclear b/c he mixes the categories (as if words from both #1 and 2 apply to good and evil equally).

May we say the God permits, ordains or ^{allows} ~~causes~~ evil in our lives w/out a redeeming purpose? No, there are no purposeless events in the long run. Romans 8:28 "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God.."

do 4: 25
2: 26, 34

Plantinga's example: A couple wants to have children/ decides to have children. Yet their children will cause evil in the world (more than if they had not been born). Are the parents then responsible for more evil in the world? Well they only weakly actualize it b/c the "bring it about". They do NOT, however, cause the evil eventhough they could have prevented all of it by not conceiving children.

At minimum we can say the God ordains or plans on evil things. That is also the maximum responsibility we can give God for them. He does not make somebody sin and then punish them for doing so. When it says in Romans 9 the God *hardens whom he wills* we need to see that more in terms of him withdrawing his softness.

LD10: unambiguous
also linked: ...