

# TH Doctrine of Man: Syllabus

Vern S. Poythress, January, 2023

[with permission, I have incorporated materials from Dr. Robert B. Strimple's course on Doctrine of Man and Carlton Wynne's course. The final responsibility is of course mine.]

## I. Introduction

### A. Purpose (from WTS catalog)

To deepen understanding of biblical anthropology in its redemptive-historical and Reformed context

Topics covered include the nature of man, particularly as a psycho-somatic unity created in the image of God; the covenant of creation; the epistemological implications of Reformed anthropology; the fall and its implications; the imputation of Adam's sin; the intermediate state; the nature of free moral agency; and total depravity and inability. Special attention will be given from an exegetical perspective to the redemptive-historical character and systematic theological implications of Reformed anthropology.

I trust that the course will serve for your growth in the kingdom of God, spiritually as well as intellectually.

### B. Basic information

1. Dates: Jan. 5 to 18.
2. Time: 9:00am to 12n, by Taipei, Taiwan, time (UTC+08:00).
3. Place: Zoom class meetings.
4. Instructor: Vern S. Poythress, Distinguished Professor of New Testament and Biblical Interpretation and Systematic Theology, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
5. Contact. I can be contacted by email ([vpoythress@wts.edu](mailto:vpoythress@wts.edu)). It is more convenient for me if you send an email directly to me at [vpoythress@wts.edu](mailto:vpoythress@wts.edu) rather than through moodle.

### C. Course arrangements

The assigned readings from Berkhof and Grudem give you an excellent exposition of the doctrine of man in its classical form. Because this content is as good as it is, it will not be repeated in class in the same form. My interaction with you aims to supplement this material and build on it, by three means: (1) attention to method, including method in exegesis, presuppositions, technical terms, and biblical theological themes; (2) additional perspectives supplementing the readings; (3) live interaction where we discuss challenges and problem areas, on the basis of the Bible. I see my role primarily as helping you to digest the classic expositions in the readings, to exercise critical discernment in appropriating them, and then to bridge from them to the type of Bible-based communication that most of you will develop as you interact with a broad spectrum of people, Christian and non-Christian.

### D. Course requirements

1. Class attendance and thoughtful participation
  - a. All registered students are expected to attend all class lectures.
  - b. During class, computers are for Zoom and note taking only. Please resist the temptation to surf the internet, check email, etc., during class time. I would like your full attention!

c. There will be opportunity for class participation and questions during lectures.

## 2. Reading Assignments

a. Lecture and reading material will supplement one another, and where there is overlap, lecture material will generally address topics and perspectives in a manner distinct from assigned readings.

b. Since students come with various backgrounds, interests, and capabilities, each student will have to plan his/her reading schedule accordingly.

c. A list of recommended reading is also included below.

d. Course Reading Materials

Berkhof, Louis. 基督教教義史 (伯克富/柏路易). Taipei, Taiwan: RTF Publishing, 1984. From *The History of Christian Doctrines*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1937. The section on the doctrine of sin and grace and related doctrines. 38 pages in the English edition.

Berkhof, Louis. 伯克富系統神學 (伯克富/柏路易). South Pasadena, CA: Kernel of Wheat Christian Ministries, 2019. From *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939. Part Two: The Doctrine of Man in Relation to God. 124 pages in the English edition.

Grudem, Wayne. 系統神學 (顧韋恩/韋恩 格魯登). Christian Renewal Ministries, 2011. From *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994. Part 3: The Doctrine of Man. 90 pages in the English edition.

Poythress, Vern S. "Biblical Teaching on Humanity," prepublication manuscript, downloadable from moodle. 400 pages. If you read nothing else, make sure that you read chap. 6. It is planned that the manuscript will be available in Chinese. But it will be translated using Google translate, which is an automatic translation program and is known to produce errors. Be aware.

e. What should be your focus when you read? Poythress, "Biblical Teaching on Humanity," covers the heart of the course. But it is available only in English. I am providing it for the benefit of students with English skills. But the intention is that students who read only Chinese would be able to complete the course with Chinese-language readings. The most important of these is Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Part 3. As much as feasible, I advise you to read the portions of Grudem that correspond to the lecture topics before we cover the topics, or at the same time that we cover them. In the lecture outline below, I indicate what are the corresponding parts in Grudem's book.

I would emphasize the importance of Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, the whole section on sin and grace, because it contains material that is not covered elsewhere.

## 3. Recommended reading

These recommended books are for people who want to explore further. Note especially Wilhelmus à Brakel, because it is available in Chinese.

Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation*. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004. [pp. 511–588]

Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics: Sin and Salvation in Christ*. Vol. 3. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006. [Chap. 3, pp. 126–157]

Berkouwer, G. C. *Man: The Image of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962. [pp. 67–147, 279–309]

Brakel, Wilhelmus à. *The Christian's Reasonable Service*. Vol. 1. Chaps. 10-15. <https://prts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/reasonableservicevol1-indexed.pdf>. [the section on man] Available online in Chinese.

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. [Book 1, chap. 15; Book 2, chaps. 1-6]. In Chinese: 加爾文基督教要義(全二冊) (約翰·加爾文).

Cooper, John. *Body, Soul, & Life Everlasting*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1989. [Chs. 1–3, 6–7]

- Frame, John M. "A Primer on Perspectivalism (Revised 2008)," <https://frame-poythress.org/a-primer-on-perspectivalism-revised-2008/>.
- Kline, Meredith. *Images of the Spirit*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2001. [pp. 13–56]
- Murray, John. *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987. [Entire book]
- Murray, John. *The Collected Writings of John Murray*, Vol. 2. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977. [pp. 1–88]
- Poythress, Vern S. *Interpreting Eden: A Guide to Faithfully Reading and Understanding Genesis 1-3*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. [Part I]
- Poythress, Vern S. *Redeeming Science: A God-Centered Approach*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2006. [Chs. 1-3, pp. 13–67; Chs. 8-10, 107–147; 249-251; Appendix 1, 341-345]
- Poythress, Vern S. *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology*. Reprint. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001. [Entire book]
- Versteeg, J. P. *Adam in the New Testament: Mere Teaching Model or First Historical Man?* Revised Edition. Translated and foreword by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2012. [Entire book, including the foreword by Gaffin]

Note that Poythress's books are available for free download at [frame-poythress.org/ebooks/](https://frame-poythress.org/ebooks/).

4. Final exam

- a. There will be a one-hour final exam covering both lectures and readings for all parts of the course.
- b. Unmarked Bibles (without study notes, etc.) in any languages may be used. You may not use any class notes or other study resources.

5. Theological paper

- a. MA/MDiv students are to write a paper of about 3500 Chinese characters. (More is permitted.)
- b. The topic may be from any of the following:
- (1) Exegetically focused topics
    - "What can we learn from Psalm 8 about topics in the doctrine of man?" or a similar paper with Psalm 8 replaced by Romans 1:18-32, or Romans 3:9-20, or Romans 5:12-21, or Ephesians 4:17-20.
  - (2) A perspective from *lex Christi*, used as a perspective on the doctrine of man
    - Pick one of the ten commandments and the attribute of God that *lex Christi* associates with that commandment: supreme (1C), holy (2C), blessed (3C), dynamic (4C), harmonious (5C), living (6C), intimate (7C), giving (8C), truthful (9C), or contented (10C). Use this attribute as a perspective. Discuss *all* of the main areas of the doctrine of man from this chosen perspective: origin of man, nature of man, body and soul, the creational covenant, free agency, the fall, the nature of sin, total depravity, and total inability.
  - (3) A perspective from creation, used as a perspective on the doctrine of man
    - Pick one of the following perspectives: light (hint: related to holy and truthful), multiplying (hint: related to living), beauty (hint: related to intimate and harmonious), sufficiency and fullness (hint: related to contented and giving), prophet (hint: related to truthful), king (hint: related to supreme and dynamic, and the theme of dominion), priest (hint: related to holy). Discuss *all* of the main areas of the doctrine of man from this chosen perspective: origin of man, nature of man, body and soul, the creational covenant, free agency, the fall, the nature of sin, total depravity, and total inability.

c. Advice. Pick among these topics (1), (2), and (3) (immediately above) with attention to your desire and skill in being creative. Topics (2) require the least creativity, because the lectures and the book manuscript of your professor contain comments on most of the topics from all ten perspectives of *lex Christi*. Your task is primarily to gather together these comments, digest them, and on the basis of them weave your own thoughts into a coherent, persuasive whole. (But note that using the resources from the book manuscript will require skill in English.) Topics (3) require the most creativity, because we do not cover them in class. But they are in principle very like topics (2). Topics (1) require intermediate creativity. You will have the benefit of being able to use commentaries on the passage that you choose. But you will have to go beyond the commentaries in drawing inferences about the doctrine of man. The grading will reward creativity (within the bounds of biblical soundness). That is, if your paper is well done, it will be easier to get a high grade in one of the more creative areas.

d. Avoid plagiarism. The paper should be primarily your own words and thoughts. Any direct quotations from sources should be in quotation marks and with a footnote or in-line citation indicating the source (with page number). When you use ideas from a source, but not the exact wording, you should cite the source but not use quotation marks. This principle holds also for your use of the Bible (include verse numbers when appropriate).

e. The paper is due March 2, 2023.

#### 6. Course grade

The final course grade will be calculated as follows:

A small amount (about 10%) based on class attendance and participation.

For BACS students, based on the final (90%).

For MA/MDiv students, 40% for the final, and 50% for the paper.

## II. The importance of the doctrine of man

Read: Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*. Part Two, I.A.

Suggesting Reading: Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*. "Sin and Grace," I.1.

- [A. "Man" as generic--"mankind"
- B. Theological importance
- C. Philosophical importance
- D. Cultural importance

## III. Interpreting Genesis 1-3

Suggested Readings:

Poythress, Vern S. *Redeeming Science*. 13–67, 107–147.

Poythress, Vern S. *Interpreting Eden*. Part I.

- A. Methodology:
  - Relation of Bible to science
  - Is Genesis historical?
- B. Doctrine of creation
- C. The six days

## IV. The origin of man

Read:

Grudem, *Systematic Theology*. chap. 21.

Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*. Part Two, I. The Origin of Man.

Suggested Readings:

Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics*. Vol. 2. 511-529.

Berkouwer, G. C. *Man: The Image of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962. 279–309.

Murray, John. *Collected Writings*. vol. 2, chap. 1.

Poythress, Vern S. *Redeeming Science*. 249-251.

Versteeg, J. P. *Adam in the New Testament*.

- A. The distinctive features of man's origin
- B. Further biblical support
  1. Gen. 2:18. Versteeg and 1 Cor 15:22; Rom 5
  2. Acts 17:26
- C. Science on anthropology
  1. Remains
    - a. Gaps
    - b. what counts as human?
  2. Genetics: see Ann Gauger, and latest at [discovery.org](http://discovery.org)
- [D. \*Creationism and traducianism

## V. Image of God

### Reading:

Grudem, *Systematic Theology*. chap. 21.

Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*. Part Two, III. Man as the Image of God.

### Suggested Readings:

Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics*. Vol. 2. 530-588.

Berkouwer, G. C. *Man: The Image of God*. 67–147.

Kline, M. G. *Images of the Spirit*. 13–56.

Murray, John. *Collected Writings*. vol. 2, ch. 4.

- A. Introduction: what is man?**
- B. The biblical data and the problems of interpretation that they pose**
  - 1. Texts which indicate that fallen man is still God's image
  - 2. Texts which indicate that man has lost the divine image and must be restored in it.
  - 3. No texts which directly define the content of the image
  - 4. Determinative character of our understanding of human nature
- C. Proposed solutions to the apparent contradiction**
  - 1. Pelagian, Arminian, Socinian, Roman Catholic
  - 2. Lutheran
  - 3. Reformed
    - a. Moral agency
    - b. Moral excellence
  - 4. G. C. Berkouwer
  - 5. Karl Barth
  - 6. \*Robert B. Strimple
  - 7. \*Meredith G. Kline
  - 8. \*D. J. A. Clines
- D. Exegesis of Gen 1:26-28**

## VI. \*Method in the study of man

### Suggested Readings:

Frame, John M. "A Primer on Perspectivalism (Revised 2008)," <https://frame-poythress.org/a-primer-on-perspectivalism-revised-2008/>.

Poythress, Vern S. *Symphonic Theology*.

- A. Hermeneutical questions**
  - 1. **Theology as application**
    - a. According to John Frame, theology is the application of the message of the Bible to ourselves. Systematic theology is the application to ourselves

of what the Bible as a whole says on a particular topic. For extended discussion, see Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987), pp. 76-90.

- b. This project contrasts with the conception of theology as a finished systematic setting forth of the truth for all time.
  - c. With respect to doctrine of man, it implies:
    - (1) Do we need to keep our list of topics or our methods the same?
    - (2) Do we need to search for an ultimate analysis?
- 2. Symphonic approach to questions: multiple perspectives.**
- a. Justified by a hermeneutics of love, applied to a situation of diversity in unity in the body of Christ.
  - b. Justified by the simplicity of God.
  - c. What are the implications for doctrine of man, where traditionally a single perspective has been used for most questions?
  - d. Appropriate positively the insights of biblical theology
  - e. Appropriate negatively insights from language theory, to the effect that many times key technical terms or widely used concepts are not precisely or clearly defined. Hence argument based on them is often argument on analogy rather than rigorous deduction, as older theology hoped it would be.
- 3. Symphonic metaphysics.**
- a. The use of technical terms uncritically may, many times, be grounded indirectly in the assumption that there is a secure metaphysics whose terms are transparent to the world or a direct match for the deep structure of the world. In the Western world, such metaphysics has typically been either Aristotelian or Kantian in derivation. But Van Til has shown this reliance on autonomous metaphysics to be untenable. Language is irreducibly analogical.
  - b. For example, questions of immanent cause (with respect to origin of man); questions of nature of man bound up with “image of God.”
  - c. The above conviction may be held even by those who are not confident that they have arrived at such an ultimate metaphysical level. Thus the response may be, “maybe our analysis can be criticized, but only because it has not arrived at the goal which will some day be reached.”
  - d. Acts 17:28; Heb 1:3; Col 1:17; Ps 104; and other passages about providence spell the end, I think, of the idea of substance as the self-existent self-defining attributes of brute things.
  - e. Our human understanding is always analogically related to divine understanding, not a one-to-one transcript of propositions in the mind of God, but an analogical communion with the personal knowledge of God: the Father knows the Son, Matt 11:27. Hence our penetration is always real but nonexhaustive, with the edges of a metaphor.
- 4. Results**
- All of the loci of theology are to be done over again.
- Hence you will sense a distance between what I am saying in class and everything that you read.
- But especially this is true concerning topics whose discussion goes back earlier than the 19th or 20th century.

**5. Current needs**

- a. Many new types of questions are being posed out of our culture, which is interested in humanity.
- b. Some questions are perennial.
- c. We need to be stimulated to deal with needs scripturally. We need to appropriate more fully the riches of Scripture. ST is mining old veins.
- d. People are more comfortable with an “inverse” system in the doctrine of God. Miracles, providence, decrees, divine attributes. Similarly, there is a need to develop an “inverse” system in the doctrine of man. Salvation, sin, fall, original nature.
- e. Scripture itself is often organized more “concretely.” There is not much information *directly* on the original state of man and the fall. Controversies on other areas are read back into this.

**B. Sonship in pauline theology****VII. The metaphysical composition of the human individual**Reading:

Grudem, *Systematic Theology*. chap. 23.

Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*. Part Two, II. The Constitutional Nature of Man.

Suggested Readings:

Cooper, John. *Body, Soul, & Life Everlasting*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1989. chaps. 1–3, 6–7.

Murray, John. *Collected Writings, Vol. 2*. chaps. 2-3.

**VIII. God’s covenant with Adam**Reading:

Grudem, *Systematic Theology*. chap. 25.

Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*. Part Two, IV. Man in the Covenant of Works.

Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*. Part Two, Man in the State of Sin, III. The Transmission of Sin, and IV.

Suggested Readings:

Murray, John. *Collected Writings, Vol. 2*. chap. 5, 47-59.

Murray, John. *The Imputation of Adam’s Sin*. Whole book.

**IX. Man as male and female**

Reading: Grudem, *Systematic Theology*. chap. 22.

Suggested Reading: Piper, John, and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991.

**X. Free agency**Suggested Readings:

Frame, John M. *The Doctrine of God*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002. chap. 8.

Murray, John. *Collected Writings, Vol. 2.* chap. 6, 60-66. Free agency.

Poythress, Vern S. *Chance and the Sovereignty of God.* Wheaton, IL Crossway, 2013. chap. 5.

## **XI. The fall of man**

### Reading:

Grudem, *Systematic Theology.* chap. 24.

Berkhof, *Systematic Theology.* Part Two, Man in the State of Sin, I. The Origin of Sin.

Suggested Reading: Murray, John. *Collected Writings, Vol. 2.* chap.7, 67-76.

## **XII. The doctrine of sin**

### Reading:

Grudem, *Systematic Theology.* chap. 24.

Berkhof, *Systematic Theology.* Part Two, Man in the State of Sin, II. The Essential Character of Sin.

### Suggested Readings:

Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics: Sin and Salvation in Christ.* Vol. 3. chap. 3, pp. 126–157.

Murray, John. *Collected Writings, Vol. 2.* chap. 8, 77-82. Nature of sin.

Murray, John. *Collected Writings, Vol. 2.* chap. 9, 83-89. Inability.

- A. The fall
- B. The nature of sin
- C. Total depravity
- D. Total inability