

# The Importance of the Doctrine of an Original Good Creation

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## **An Original Good Creation**

God made His creation good. Repeatedly God judged that what He had created was “good.” After He made the plants and vegetation on the third day, the Bible says: “And God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:12). After God finished His work of creation, we are told that He “saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). Adam and Eve were created holy. They were directing their lives to the glory of their Creator. The world was good. There were no thorns.

The new world, Paradise regained, will be a place where the lion can lay down with the lamb. There will be peace between the creatures that inhabit it. In the new heavens and the new earth, all swords and spears will be turned into tools for agriculture. There will be no military colleges. People will learn war no more. God will pronounce the new world to be very good. In the new world there will be no curse or sin.

## **Denials of an Original Good Creation**

Today there is a denial that God made the earth and everything in it good. The atheistic evolutionary denial of the doctrine of creation brings with it the idea that humans evolved by the supposed instrument of natural selection from lower forms of life that evolve by fighting for supremacy by tooth and nail. Supposedly humans came into existence in a world of sin, curse, and death where the strong dominated over the weak. Only the strongest succeeded and survived. Human nature supposedly evolved out of the natures of subordinate creatures. Therefore, man never was good.

The Bible teaches that God made man and woman good. He made them in a good world. God did not make man with a manufacturer's defect. Man was made perfect, in the image of God. He was able to serve God, love his wife, and seek the welfare of the creation. Paradise was good. Adam and Eve lived in a marvelous garden paradise. God made the fruit trees good. The Tree of Life was good and as they partook of it they would live forever in fellowship with their Creator.

The Christian faith as confessed by the Reformed churches is not composed of a loose aggregate of isolated doctrines. The doctrines of the Christian faith are related to each other. For example, one cannot understand the doctrine of the Fall apart from the doctrine of a good creation. One cannot understand Christ as the legal head and representative of His people apart from the Biblical teaching that Adam was the head of the human race. Redemption is necessary only because of the reality of the sin and guilt of the human race.

Two professors who taught at Calvin College, Dr. John Schneider and Dr. Daniel Harlow, have publicly denied that God made man good. This teaching undermines the entire system of Christian doctrine. Dr. Schneider is correct in supposing that his rejection of the doctrines of an original good creation and the Fall result in "rethinking a connected cluster of traditional Protestant teachings logically linked with other doctrines that constitute the confessional core of their institutional identities."

### **John Schneider's Denial**

Dr. John Schneider rejects the confessional Reformed teachings on the historical Fall. He supports the idea that human beings did not descend from a single human pair, but from at least 1,000 pairs at a minimum. He understands Adam and Eve as "literary types that represented the first human beings symbolically." He admits that "This hermeneutical strategy will probably require giving up concordism and its principled inerrancy, however, because it seems unlike that Paul (or Luke) in

the New Testament understood biblical Adam in this symbolic way.” He says that “The mere fact that Paul thought Adam, like Abraham, was a specific person by that name does not necessarily mean that we should have that belief (widely held by first-century Jews) now.” He rejects the idea of a historical Fall and the curse of God that followed it: “The trouble is that paleoscience overwhelmingly proves that labor pains, the locomotion of snakes, predation, deadly diseases, mass extinction, thorn plants and weeds, and violent natural events existed for millennia before the existence of the first humans. Thus, they cannot be the consequence of a “curse” that god placed on the creation as punishment for human sin.” Explaining the results of the evolutionary origin of humans, he states “The bottom line is that if the first human beings evolved genetically this way, then it is very hard to see how they could have originated in conditions of original righteousness, as required by Augustinian theology, for they would have inherited powerful natural dispositions toward selfish actions.” He also rejects the idea of a covenant of works with stipulations; “And even if we imagine that God strangely broke his policy of nonintervention and interrupted the moral voice of nature with an explicit command, what sort of command could that have been? The immature, biologically driven, intellectually naïve and confused creatures...would have had quite a time making sense of divine moral discourse and conforming immediately to all its unnatural demands.” Appealing to Irenaeus and Karl Barth, Dr. Schneider invents a supralapsarian decree where God ordains a sinful, fallen world instead of a good creation.

### **Daniel Harlow’s Denial**

Dr. Harlow clearly rejects a factual, historical account of Genesis 1-3 that would affirm that Adam and Eve are historic persons who were made in ethical perfection, in the image of God. He also denies that the human race finds an organic unity in a first father and mother, claiming that “the ancestors of all modern Homo sapiens were a population of about 10,000 interbreeding individuals.” He claims that “Mitochondrial Eve was only one member of a large breeding population.” Dr. Harlow denies not only an original good creation, but the doctrine of the Fall. He claims that recent studies provide evidence which “establishes that virtually all of the acts considered “sinful” in humans are part of the natural repertoire of behavior among animals.” He therefore rejects an original Paradise. He claims that biological death was not a divine punishment for sin. He clearly supports the idea that “Adam and Eve are strictly literary figures—characters in a divinely inspired story about the imagined past that intends to teach primarily theological, not historical, truths about God, creation, and humanity.” The problem with this is that Christianity is a historical faith. One cannot separate the theological truths from the historical realities. Dr. Harlow claims that “although a historical Adam and Eve have been

very important in the Christian tradition, they are not central to biblical theology as such.” He therefore wants to reformulate the doctrines of the Fall and original sin in light of evolutionary science. Dr. Harlow claims that “Genesis itself does not picture the first humans being created in a state of spiritual maturity and moral perfection.” He claims that “human death was a natural part of God’s created world, not part of the fallout of a fall.” Rejecting the organic unity of Scripture along with the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, Dr. Harlow claims that Genesis 3 “does not depict the man and woman’s transgression as an act that infected all subsequent humanity.” He claims that “There is no indication in the biblical text that the first couple passed on to their descendants either their guilt or a newly acquired inclination to sin.” Dr. Harlow also claims that in Romans 5:12 that the Apostle Paul does not depict Adam as a figure of history but rather as a type of Christ. He even claims that Paul “no doubt regarded Adam as a historical person.” He thinks that “a historical Adam was not essential” to Paul’s teaching. He claims that the Apostle Paul teaches that “Adam’s act affected the human race but did not infect it.”

### **Only a Symptom**

The theological position of Dr. Harlow is only a symptom of the deeper problem, his doctrine of Scripture. For example, when explaining the serpent in Genesis 3 he can say: “Only in later Jewish and Christian interpretation does it get identified with Satan.” It is not merely a Jewish or Christian interpretation of the serpent that we find in Scripture, rather we find the authoritative revelation of God in His Word about the identity of the serpent: “And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:2). Dr. Schneider explicitly states that to affirm his position one will need “to abandon belief in the verbal inerrancy of Scripture.”

The Bible teaches that all Scripture is God breathed. Jesus says that the Scriptures cannot be broken. The Apostle Peter teaches that the prophets spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. The prophet Isaiah claimed to speak the very word of God in his prophecies. Article 4 of the Belgic Confession states that “nothing can be alleged” against the Old and New Testaments. Article 5 confesses that “We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith; believing, without any doubt, all things contained in them.” Article 7 confesses that the “Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein.” We confess that “it is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures.” We confess that “it doth thereby evidently appear that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects.” We also do not consider “of equal value any writing

of men, however holy these men may have been, with those divine Scriptures.” We also “reject with all our hearts whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule.” Herman Bavinck is right when he states: ‘But when Scripture, from its own perspective precisely as the book of religion, comes in contact with other sciences and also sheds its light on them, it does not all at once cease to be the Word of God but remains that Word. Even when it speaks about the genesis of heaven and earth, it does not present saga or myth or poetic fantasy but offers, in accordance with its own clear intent, history, the history that deserves credence and trust. And for that reason Christian theology, with only a few exceptions, continued to hold onto the literal historical view of the creation story’ (*Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:495).

### **The Implications of Denying an Original Good Creation**

I want to demonstrate what the implications are of denying the doctrine of an original good creation. Under each heading I first provide Scripture proof texts for the biblical teaching on a subject. Secondly, I provide confessional statements to demonstrate that the errors of the two Religion professors militate against the clear teaching of the *Three Forms of Unity*. Finally, I conclude by providing citations from Herman Bavinck on the relevant subject (because he is a representative Reformed theologian within the confessional tradition).

*First, if there is no original good creation then the biblical and Reformed story of creation/fall/redemption collapses.* Genesis 1 tells us that God pronounced all that He created “good”. The wise man is inspired to write in Ecclesiastes: “Behold, I have found only this, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many devices.” (Ecclesiastes 7:29) The Reformed confessions also teach that God made man good. The *Heidelberg Catechism* tells us “God created man good, and after His own image” (Answer 6). The *Belgic Confession of Faith* reads: “We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth, and made and formed him after His own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy, capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God. But being in honor, he understood it not, neither knew his excellency, but willfully subjected himself to sin, and consequently to death and the curse, giving ear to the words of the devil.” (*Belgic Confession* Article 14). The *Canons of Dordt* teach: “Election is the unchangeable purpose of God whereby, before the foundation of the world, He hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His own will, chosen, from the whole human race, *which had fallen through their own fault from their primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction*, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom He from eternity appointed the mediator and head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation” (*Canons of Dordrecht*, I, Article 7).

Herman Bavinck, a representative Reformed theologian writes that “The essence of the Christian religion consists in this, that the creation of the Father, devastated by sin, is restored in the death of the Son of God, and re-created by the Holy Spirit into a kingdom of God.” (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* I:112). He teaches an original good creation: “Christianity does not introduce a single substantial foreign element into the creation. It creates no new cosmos but rather makes the cosmos new. It restores what was corrupted by sin.” (Herman Bavinck, “Common Grace,” trans. Raymond Van Leeuwen, *Calvin Theological Journal* 24 (1989): 59-61). The doctrine of creation and the fact that it was a good creation is fundamental to the Christian Faith: “For that reason also creation is the fundamental dogma: throughout Scripture it is in the foreground and is the foundation stone on which the Old and New Covenants rest.” (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:438).

*Second, the rejection of the historical existence of Adam and Eve who lived in original ethical perfection is a rejection of the doctrine of the covenant of works.* The revelation of the covenant of works is found in Genesis 2:16-17: “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.” The *Belgic Confession of Faith* teaches that Adam and Eve were the first parents of the human race: “We believe that, all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of our first parents,...” (*Belgic Confession*, Article 16). The *Heidelberg Catechism* states that God created man so “that he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love Him, and live with Him in *eternal happiness* to glorify and praise Him” (A. 6). The *Belgic Confession of Faith* teaches an originally uncorrupt Adam: “For the *commandment of life* which he had received he transgressed; and by sin separated himself from God, who was his true life; having corrupted his whole nature; whereby he made himself liable to corporal and spiritual death” (*Belgic Confession* Article 14). Herman Bavinck teaches that the entire human race fell due to the sin of one person, Adam:

Added to this is the fact that the angels are not constituted as a single race. Humans could and did fall in one person; and they can be and are saved in one person. But the devils did not fall “in” another, but everyone fell by himself individually. Among them there was no covenant of works, and so there is no room for a covenant of grace either (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:148).

*Third, since the covenant of works provides the basic legal framework for the covenant of grace, rejecting the original covenant undermines the covenant of grace,*

*since the latter assumes the righteousness of God and other key judicial concepts.* The Scriptures affirm the perfect righteousness of God. The Apostle Paul speaks about Christ as the One “whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance had had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:25-26). The Synod of Dort rejected the errors of those who claim that God revoked the demand that His creatures perfectly obey Him after the Fall of Adam. The synod stated that it rejected those

Who teach that the new covenant of grace, which God the Father, through the mediation of the death of Christ, made with man, does not herein consist that we by faith, inasmuch as it accepts the merits of Christ, are justified before God and saved, but in the fact that God, having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of the law, regards faith itself and the obedience of faith, although imperfect, as the perfect obedience of the law, and does esteem it worthy of the reward of eternal life through grace. For these contradict the Scriptures: *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood* (Rom. 3:24,25) And these proclaim, as did the wicked Socinus, a new and strange justification of man before God, against the consensus of the whole church (*Canons of Dordrecht, II, Error 4*).

Herman Bavinck affirmed that the original demand found in the covenant of works, namely that God’s creatures perfectly obey Him remained:

After the covenant of works had been broken, God did not immediately conceive a totally different covenant unrelated to the preceding one and that has a different character. That simply could not be the case, for God is unchangeable; the demand posed to humans in the covenant of works is not arbitrary and capricious. The image of God, the law, and religion can by their very nature only be one; grace, nature, and faith cannot or may not nullify the law (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:266).

*Fourth, a denial of the imputation of the guilt of the first federal head to the human race, logically results in a denial of forensic justification, the doctrine that Calvin called “the main hinge on which true religion turns” and about which Luther said, “When the article of justification has fallen, everything has fallen.” A rejection of the imputation of the guilt of Adam to the entire human race is logically accompanied by a denial of the confessional doctrine of forensic justification, that*

*is, that justification is a legal declaration in which God imputes the active righteousness of Christ to believers by grace alone through faith alone.* The Sacred Scriptures teach justification by faith alone: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). The Apostle Paul teaches that the obedience of the Second Adam is imputed to elect believers: “For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19). The *Belgic Confession of Faith* affirms that the forgiveness of our sins involves a forensic justification in which God imputes to believers the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ solely through the instrumentality of *faith* in Jesus.

Therefore we justly say with Paul, that we are justified by faith alone, or by faith without works. However, to speak more clearly, we do not mean that faith itself justifies us, for it is only an instrument with which we embrace Christ our righteousness. But Jesus Christ, imputing to us all His merits and so many holy works which He has done for us and in our stead, is our righteousness. And faith is an instrument that keeps us in communion with Him in all His benefits, which, when become ours, are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins (*Belgic Confession*, Art. 22).

*Fifth, if all human beings do not originate from Adam and Eve, then the organic unity of the human race is denied. The Scriptures teach the organic unity of all mankind as the background of the doctrine of the church—that the church of all ages is also an organic unity that is united to Christ her head.* The Sacred Scriptures teach the organic unity of the human race: “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). In the *Belgic Confession of Faith*, Reformed believers confess: “We believe that, all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of our first parents,...”(Belgic Confession, Art. 16). Herman Bavinck, who is a representative Reformed theologian, affirms that the entire human race originated with a first father: “...that is, the church is not an accidental and arbitrary aggregate of individuals that can just as easily be smaller or larger, but forms with him an organic whole that is included in him as the second Adam, just as the whole of mankind arises from the first Adam” (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:467). Bavinck distinguishes the organic unity of the human race from the individuality found among the angels:

In the first place, remember, humanity is not an aggregate of individuals but an organic unity, one race, one family. Angels, on the other hand, all stand



side-by-side, independently of one another. They were all created at the same time and are not the products of procreation. Among them a divine judgment such as was pronounced upon all humanity in Adam would not have been possible: everyone stood or fell on his own. But that is not how it is among us. God created all of us from one man (Acts 17:26); we are not a heap of souls piled on a piece of ground, but all blood relatives of one another, connected to one another by a host of ties... (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:102).

*Sixth, if all humans do not originate from Adam and Eve, then there is no first Adam who is the legal head and representative of the human race, and therefore there can be neither original guilt nor the original pollution that results from the former. The doctrine of original sin is denied. Sacred Scripture teaches the doctrine of original guilt: "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men" (Romans 5:18). The Heidelberg Catechism speaks to this issue:*

Q. 10. Will God suffer such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?

A. By no means; but is terribly displeased with our original as well as actual sins; and will punish them in His just judgment temporally and eternally,... (Heidelberg Catechism Question 10).

Reformed believers confess the doctrine of original sin in the *Belgic Confession of Faith*:

We believe that, through the disobedience of Adam, original sin is extended to all mankind; which is a corruption of the whole nature and an hereditary disease, wherewith infants themselves are infected even in their mother's womb, and which produceth in man all sorts of sin, being in him as a root thereof, and therefore is so vile and abominable in the sight of God that it is sufficient to condemn all mankind (*Belgic Confession Article 15*).

Herman Bavinck, in line with confession orthodoxy defends the doctrine of original corruption:

And among us the first human again occupies an utterly unique and incomparable place. Like branches in a trunk, a mass at its beginning, members in a head, so all of us were germinally present in Adam's loins, and all proceeded from that source. He was not a private person, not a loose individual alongside other such loose individuals, but a root-source, the base,

the seminal beginning of the whole human race, our common natural head. In a sense it can be said that “we all were that one human,” that what he did was done by us all in him. The choice he made and the action he undertook were those of all his descendants. Certainly this physical oneness of the whole of humanity in Adam as such is of great importance for the explanation of original sin. It is its necessary presupposition and prerequisite (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 102).

Bavinck finds a law of solidarity or covenant headship in both the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. Adam was the organic and legal head of the human race. Christ is the organic and legal head of elect humanity. He states: “The law of solidarity does not explain the covenant (of works or grace) but is based on it and harks back to it” (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:105).

*Seventh, the denial of the existence of a historical Adam destroys the biblical parallel that obtains between the first Adam and Christ as the second Adam who is the representative head of elect humanity.* Sacred Scripture identifies a parallel between the first Adam and the second Adam:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many (Romans 5:12-15).

The *Canons of Dort* affirm the existence of the first Adam whose guilt was imputed to the human race: “As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish, and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin” (*Canons of Dordrecht* I, Article 1). The Heidelberg Catechism teaches that the perfect righteousness of the second Adam is imputed to believers:

Q. 60. How art thou righteous before God?

A. Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ; so that, though my conscience accuse me that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me the perfect

satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Q. & A. 60).

Herman Bavinck affirms that Christ is the second Adam who replaces Christ:

The difference between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace therefore consists in the fact that in the latter God asserts not one but a double demand, and that with this double demand he approaches not humanity in Adam but humanity in Christ. The covenant of works and the covenant of grace primarily differ in that Adam is exchanged for and replaced by Christ (*Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:226).

*Eighth, since the incarnation is only possible because God made man in the image of God, those who deny that God made man, as the Catechism says, “after His own image, in true righteousness and holiness,” deny the possibility of the incarnation.* Herman Bavinck argues that the doctrine that God made Adam and Eve ethically pure and in the divine image is the precondition for the possibility of Christmas:

Specifically, the creation of humans in God’s image is a supposition and preparation for the incarnation of God....Still, man [generis] *is* akin to God; man is his image, his son, his offspring. Thus the incarnation of God is a possibility, and the question whether God can take on the nature of a stone, a plant, or an animal—which Occam answered in the affirmative—is out of order....Those who consider the incarnation impossible must, on further reflection, also at some point deny creation (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:277).

The denial of the truth that Adam and Eve were made holy, righteous, and with the true knowledge of God is a grinch that would rob Christians of the incarnation and Christmas.

*Ninth, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is undermined by the denial of Adam’s death being a result of a judicial judgment of God. God’s justification of Christ at His resurrection can only be understood as the flipside of the judicial judgment of condemnation that resulted in the death of Adam.* Sacred Scripture teaches that Adam’s sin led to death: “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection from the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:20-22). The Apostle Paul speaks to the same issue again in Romans 4:25: “He who was delivered over because of our transgressions,

and was raised because of our justification.” Herman Bavinck writes: “Inasmuch as by one human being death came into the world, so also the resurrection from the dead was made into the principle of eternal life by a human being” (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:437). Bavinck affirms that the death of humans finds its source in the sin of Adam with the gracious flipside being that the righteous life of Jesus results in the resurrection of believers.

In 1 Corinthians 15:21f., he [Paul] states that just as the death of all humanity has its cause in the person of Adam, so the resurrection from the dead has its cause in the person of Christ. Clearly implied here is that just as the death of all people was not first caused by their personal sins but already pronounced upon all humanity and passed on to all solely because of Adam’s disobedience, so the resurrection has not been won by the personal good works and faith and so on of the believers but exclusively by the obedience of Christ (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:83).

Bavinck affirms that death is the penalty for sin: “For the view that death is a consequence of the material organism of a human being by no means rules out the fact that it is the penalty of sin. The reason why for humans the punishment of sin can consist in death is that humans are made of dust and taken from the earth” (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:183).

*Tenth, the denial of the imputation of the guilt of Adam to all humanity carries with it a logical denial of the imputation of the active and passive righteousness of Christ to believers.* Sacred Scripture teaches: “Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men” (Romans 5:18). The *Canons of Dort* reject the errors of those

Who teach that all men have been accepted into the state of reconciliation and unto the grace of the covenant, so that no one is worthy of condemnation on account of original sin, and that no one shall be condemned because of it, but that all are free from the guilt of original sin. Rejection: For this opinion is repugnant to Scripture which teaches that we are *by nature children of wrath*. (*Canons of Dort*, II, rejection of errors 5).

The *Belgic Confession of Faith* affirms the imputation of the merits of Christ (His active obedience) to believers: “But Jesus Christ, imputing to us all His merits and so many holy works which he has done for us and in our stead, is our righteousness” (*Belgic Confession* Article 22).

*Eleventh, the denial that death and the curse are judicial consequences that result from the judgment of God as a righteous judge upon fallen mankind involves*

*a denial of the cross as a propitiatory sacrifice (a wrath-appeasing sacrifice in which God punishes Christ on behalf of and in the place of His people).* Dr. Harlow supposes that a reformulation of the doctrine of original sin will lead to a deepening of the doctrine of the atonement. By this he means that it will involve a rejection of the cross as vicarious sacrifice. Instead, he wants to affirm a Christus victor or moral influence “model” of the atonement. But the cross as a vicarious sacrifice that satisfied the justice of God is a confessional doctrine. Sacred Scripture teaches that Christ was a wrath-appeasing sacrifice. The Apostle Paul writes concerning Christ: “whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith” (Romans 3:25). The Heidelberg Catechism teaches that Christ endured the wrath of God:

Q. & A. 37. What dost thou understand by the words, “He suffered”?

A. That He, all the time that He lived on earth, but especially at the end of His life, sustained in body and soul the wrath of God against the sins of all mankind; that so by his passion, as the only propitiatory sacrifice, He might redeem our body and soul from everlasting damnation.

The *Belgic Confession of Faith* affirms that Christ needed to appease God’s wrath against the sins of His people: “We believe that Jesus Christ ...hath presented Himself in our behalf before the Father to appease His wrath by His full satisfaction, by offering Himself on the tree of the cross and pouring out His precious blood to purge away our sins” (*Belgic Confession* Article 21). The *Canons of Dort* affirm that God needed to punish Christ for our sins in order to deliver us from eternal punishment:

God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. And his justice requires (as He hath revealed Himself in His Word) that our sins committed against His infinite majesty should be punished, not only with temporal, but with eternal punishment, both in body and soul; which we cannot escape unless satisfaction be made to the justice of God (*Canons of Dort* II, Article 1).

So, the doctrine of creation and the nexus of doctrines surrounding it are Biblical and confessional.