

Galatians, Reformed Controversies, Works of the Law, Roman Catholicism, The New Perspective on Paul, The Federal Vision, and Republication.

Reformed view of “Works of the Law”

Works of the Law

In Reformed theology, the "works of the law" are understood to be the things that the law of the Lord commands, including the two great commandments to love God and neighbor³. These works, therefore, include all that is objectively good. However, no good deed of ours, however sincere, is ever pure enough to justify us³.

Covenant of Works, Covenant of Grace

The Reformed tradition also emphasizes the doctrine of the "Covenant of Works" and the "Covenant of Grace". The Covenant of Works was God's arrangement with Adam and Eve before their fall into sin⁵. The Covenant of Grace, on the other hand, governs the rest of the Bible⁵. In this view, all stages of the Covenant of Grace were the same in substance. They differed only as God administered His one covenant of grace in Christ in various ways throughout biblical history⁵.

Paul's Justification by Faith

The Apostle Paul's argument that a man is justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; 3:11; 3:24) is a central tenet of Reformed theology⁴. This teaching strikes a decisive blow to the thesis of the New Perspective, if Paul is, in fact, teaching that justification is what the Reformed taught it to be, namely, a once-for-all legal act of God⁴.

Conclusion

So, in essence, while works (both ceremonial and moral) have their place in the life of a believer, they are not the basis of our justification. That comes through faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone. This is a core teaching of Reformed

Presbyterianism. I hope this helps clarify the topic for your bible study! 😊

Source: Conversation with Copilot, 5/21/2024

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<https://rts.edu/resources/the-covenant-of-works/>.

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<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/works-law>.

(4) Reformed Theology Is Covenant Theology - Ligonier Ministries.

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/reformed-theology-covenant-theology/>.

(5) The New Perspective on Justification - Ligonier Ministries.

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/new-perspective-justification/>.

Yes, Roman Catholicism does make a distinction between ceremonial laws and general acts of morality¹³⁴.

Roman Catholic View of “Works of the Law”

Aquinas Categories of Law

In Catholic theology, the Divine law of the Old Testament, or the Mosaic Law, is commonly divided into civil, ceremonial, and moral precepts⁴. The **ceremonial precepts** regulated matters of religion and the worship of God¹⁴. These included rites, ordinances, and shadows typifying Jesus Christ in his sufferings². With the death of Christ, a full period was put to these ceremonial laws².

Catholic View of the Moral Precepts

On the other hand, the **moral precepts** are a Divine code of ethics³⁴. These are most directly demanded by natural law, such as the prohibitions on murder¹. These moral laws are understood to be universally applicable and not abrogated with the coming of Christ¹.

Conclusion

So, in essence, while the ceremonial laws were specific to the Jewish people and their worship of God, the moral laws represent universal ethical principles that remain relevant. This distinction is indeed recognized in Roman Catholicism. I hope this helps clarify the topic! 😊

Source: Conversation with Copilot, 5/21/2024

(1) The Law of God | Catholic Answers Magazine.

<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/the-law-of-god>.

(2) Divine Law | Catholic Answers Encyclopedia.

<https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/divine-law>.

(3) THE LAW OF MOSES: MORAL, CEREMONIAL AND CIVIL.

http://www.southside-coc.org/all_books/2008/2008_12.pdf.

(4) A Westminster Divine on the Threefold Distinction in the Law.

<https://heidelblog.net/2010/05/a-westminster-divine-on-the-threefold-distinction->

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How this relates to the New Perspective on Paul

Overview

Absolutely, I'd be happy to help fill in the blanks on the New Perspective on Paul (NPP). The NPP is a movement within biblical studies that seeks to reinterpret the writings of the Apostle Paul¹².

The NPP started with scholar E. P. Sanders' 1977 work "Paul and Palestinian Judaism" and has been further developed by scholars like James D.G. Dunn and N.T. Wright¹². The movement is indeed nuanced and offers a fresh perspective on Paul's teachings¹².

Here are some key points about the NPP:

1. ****Historical Context****:

The NPP argues that the traditional Protestant interpretation of Paul's writings has been influenced by the 16th-17th Century Protestant-Catholic debates¹². NPP proponents believe that these debates have been read back into Paul's works, leading to a misinterpretation of his teachings².

2. ****Second Temple Judaism****:

The NPP emphasizes the importance of understanding Paul's writings in the context of first-century Judaism¹². It argues that Second Temple Judaism was not a "legalistic community" oriented to "salvation by works" but was under God's covenant¹. Following the Law was not a way of entering the covenant, but of staying within it¹.

3. ****Works of the Law****:

The NPP asserts that when Paul speaks of "works of the law", he is referring to observances such as circumcision, dietary laws, and Sabbath laws, which were the "boundary markers" that set the Jews apart from other ethnic groups¹. It's not about general good works¹.

4. ****Covenant Membership****:

Many NPP thinkers assert that "the gospel" is not about how an individual is saved; rather, it has to do with how one identifies the members of the new covenant community².

5. ****Justification****:

The NPP has recast the Reformed understanding of justification. Some NPP scholars have offered readings of Paul that are not substantially different from interpretations of Paul proposed by Roman Catholic theologians during the Reformation².

Conclusion

The NPP is a complex and nuanced movement that offers a different lens through which to view Paul's teachings. It's important to note that while it has gained popularity, it has also faced criticism and is not universally accepted^{1,2}. I hope this helps clarify the New Perspective on Paul for you! 😊

Source: Conversation with Copilot, 5/21/2024

(1) New Perspective on Paul - Wikipedia.

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(2) The New Perspective on Paul | Ligonier Ministries.

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(3) New Perspective on Paul | Theopedia. <https://www.theopedia.com/new-perspective-on-paul>.

(4) What Is the New Perspective on Paul? - Logos Bible Study Platform.

<https://www.logos.com/grow/what-is-the-new-perspective-on-paul/>.

How this Relates to the Federal Vision

Overview

The Federal Vision (also called Auburn Avenue Theology) is a Reformed evangelical theological conversation that focuses on covenant theology, Trinitarian thinking, the sacraments of baptism and communion, biblical theology and typology, justification, and postmillennialism¹.

Here are some key points about the Federal Vision:

1. ****Covenant Theology****:

Federal Vision theology emphasizes the importance of the covenant in understanding the relationship between God and His people¹. It views the covenant as more than just a contract; it's a familial bond that includes obligations and blessings¹.

2. ****Sacraments****:

Federal Vision places a strong emphasis on the sacraments of baptism and communion¹. It sees these sacraments as means of grace and important aspects of the covenant relationship¹.

3. ****Justification****:

Federal Vision has a nuanced view of justification. While it affirms justification by faith alone, it also emphasizes the transformative aspect of faith and the role of good works as evidence of genuine faith¹.

4. ****Postmillennialism****:

Federal Vision generally holds to a postmillennial eschatology, which believes that Christ will return after a period of Christian prosperity and dominance¹.

Conclusion

The Federal Vision doctrine has been controversial within Reformed and Presbyterian circles¹. Some critics argue that it blurs the distinction between justification and sanctification and undermines the doctrine of justification by faith alone¹.

In relation to the New Perspective on Paul (NPP), both Federal Vision and NPP seek to understand Paul's teachings in their original historical and cultural context¹. They both emphasize the importance of the covenant and the role of works within the covenant¹. However, they differ in their understanding of justification and the role of works in salvation¹.

I hope this helps clarify the Federal Vision doctrine and its relevance to this debate! 😊

Source: Conversation with Copilot, 5/21/2024

(1) Federal Vision - Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Vision.

(2) Federal Vision | Theopedia. <https://www.theopedia.com/federal-vision>.

(3) Federal Vision Theology - What is it? - CompellingTruth.org.

<https://www.compellingtruth.org/Federal-Vision-Theology.html>.

The Efficacy of the Sacraments According to the Westminster Standards compared with Federal Vision

Intro

Yes, your understanding of the sacraments according to the Westminster Standards is correct. The Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) teaches that sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and his benefits^{1,2}. Baptism is seen as a covenant inauguration, and the Lord's Supper is a means of grace signifying a true spiritual presence^{1,2}.

Now, let's compare this with the Federal Vision's understanding of the sacraments:

1. ****Sacramental Union****:

The Federal Vision theology emphasizes a strong sacramental union, where the sacraments are not just signs but are efficacious, meaning they do what they signify^{6,8}. This can lead to an identification of the sign with that which is signified⁷.

2. ****Baptism****:

Federal Vision sees baptism as more than a sign of the covenant; it is viewed as a means of incorporating a person into the covenant community⁶. Some Federal Vision proponents even view baptism as a converting ordinance⁸.

3. ****Lord's Supper****:

In the Federal Vision perspective, the Lord's Supper is seen as a means of grace that can communicate blessings apart from faith^{6,8}. Some proponents believe that unbelievers can feed upon Christ when they partake of the Lord's Supper⁸.

In summary:

While both the Westminster Standards and Federal Vision affirm the importance of the sacraments as means of grace, they differ in their understanding of how these sacraments work. The Federal Vision tends to attribute a stronger efficacy to the sacraments, seeing them as more than mere signs, which has been a point of controversy^{6,8}. I hope this helps clarify the distinction! 😊

Source: Conversation with Copilot, 5/21/2024

(1) Chapter 27: Of the Sacraments - A Puritan's Mind.

<https://www.apuritansmind.com/westminster-standards/chapter-27/>.

(2) WCF CHAPTER 27: Of the Sacraments - The Westminster Standards.

<http://thewestminsterstandards.com/wcf-chapter-27-of-the-sacraments/>.

(3) Federal Vision | Theopedia. <https://www.theopedia.com/federal-vision>.

(4) Debating the Federal Vision - Banner of Truth USA.

<https://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2004/debating-the-federal-vision/>.

(5) Union with Christ and the Sacraments - Reformed Theological Seminary.

[https://rts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Walker-](https://rts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Walker-Union_with_Christ_and_Sacraments.pdf)

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(6) WLC 162: What is a sacrament? :: The Westminster Standards with Video

<https://thewestminsterstandards.com/wlc-162-what-is-a-sacrament/>.

(7) CHAPTER 27 OF THE SACRAMENTS - wrs.edu.

[https://www.wrs.edu/assets/docs/Courses/Westminster%20Standards/WCF_27--](https://www.wrs.edu/assets/docs/Courses/Westminster%20Standards/WCF_27--Sacraments.pdf)
[Sacraments.pdf](https://www.wrs.edu/assets/docs/Courses/Westminster%20Standards/WCF_27--Sacraments.pdf).

(8) Report of the Synodical Study Committee on the Federal Vision and

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The Allegory in Galatians 4 (vv 21-26) and “Republicaion”

Overview

Sure, let's start with the allegory in Galatians. In Galatians 4:21-26, Paul uses an allegory of two women, Hagar and Sarah, to represent two covenants^{1 2 3 4 5}. Hagar, the slave woman, represents Mount Sinai and corresponds to present-day Jerusalem, in slavery with her children³. Sarah, the free woman, represents the Jerusalem above and is free³. This allegory is used to contrast the "free" of promise (Sarah) vs the "slave" under the law (Hagar), New Jerusalem vs Sinai^{1 2 3 4 5}.

Covenant of Works, Covenant of Grace

Now, regarding the Mosaic Covenant and the Covenant of Grace, the Mosaic Covenant is indeed part of the broader Covenant of Grace^{6 7 8}. It includes provisions that remind God's people of the Covenant of Works, but it's important to note that the Israelites who lived under the Mosaic Covenant owed their salvation to grace and not to works^{6 7 8}.

Republication

The controversy you're referring to is known as the "republication" controversy^[^10^]¹¹. The doctrine of republication asserts that the Mosaic Covenant is in some sense a republication of the Covenant of Works^[^10^]¹¹. This means that while the Mosaic Covenant is clearly part of God's administration of grace, it does work somewhat differently⁷. This is a law covenant. Israel must do certain things, not to be saved, but to stay in the land⁷. If they keep the covenant, they receive the blessings. If they break the covenant, they will experience the curses of the covenant⁷.

Conclusion

While republication is considered orthodox from a Reformed point of view, it has indeed been a point of controversy in Reformed circles^[^10^]¹¹. Some critics argue that it blurs the distinction between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace^[^10^]¹¹. I hope this helps clarify these points! 😊

Source: Conversation with Copilot, 5/21/2024

(1) Galatians 4:24 These things serve as illustrations, for the women

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(4) An Allegory Explained - 3rd Main Section of Paul's Letter to the Galatians.

<https://www.simplybible.com/f209-galat-an-allegory-explained.htm>.

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