

# Introduction to Christian Theology: Class 4 Outline

## Humanity and Sin

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### The Contemporary Battle over Human Nature

*This is not an easy task under any circumstances. But it is made triply difficult by the fact that the nature of the person is, today, a battlefield of conflicting academic, scientific, artistic, religious, legal, and political viewpoints. Now I must at this point implore the reader to stay with me for the next few paragraphs, and not to regard what is discussed in them as merely academic. We must understand that in today's "Western Culture" the "academic" is never "merely." It is the academic that today governs the idea systems of our world and opposes traditional views of human nature—specifically, the Judeo-Christian or biblical understanding of human life.*

*Today you will hear many presumably learned people say that there is no such thing as human nature, or that human beings do not have a nature. Now, there is a long historical development back of this view, which we cannot deal with here, and it is not entirely without an important point. But that point is mis-made in the statement that human beings do not have a nature. It then becomes a part of the unchecked political and moral rage against identity that characterizes modern life. This is a rage predicated upon the idea that identity restricts freedom. If I am a human being, as opposed to, say, a brussels sprout or a squirrel, that places a restriction upon what I can do, what I ought to do, or what should be done to me. Now, this embattled state of human nature tells us at least two things:*

*First, it tells us that the issue of human nature is of great importance---too important for us to leave alone. We must deal with it if we are to have anything useful to say about spiritual formation and about the spiritual life that Jesus brings. Otherwise what we say will have no relation to the concrete existence of real human beings, and this, unfortunately, is all too often the case in speaking of the "spiritual." Second, it tells us that the confusion now publically prevailing over the makeup of the human being may not be due to its inherent obscurity. Rather, it may be due to the fact that it is a field where strongly armed prejudices---assumptions about what must be the case, "Don't bother me with the facts."--- prevent even well-intended people from seeing what, at least in basic outline, is fairly obvious, simple and straightforward."*

**Dallas Willard, Renovation of the Heart**

*The same question of the human Thou encounters us from another angle.*

*Egoistic eros, which treats itself as absolute, constantly plunges us into new crises. If we adopt the pure aim of self-fulfillment in its name, then in the choice of a partner we subject ourselves exclusively to the criterion whether the other will be complimentary and thus complete us and fit in with us in every way. Only thus can the other serve the development of our own entelechy and bring sexual satisfaction in the process. But if we focus on this criterion alone—as is often the case when eros is aroused---we are forced into permanent checking and are thus delivered up to a permanent state of crisis. The counterquestion that is forced on us is whether the other is really and always "right" for us. Does this other really bring maximum fulfillment?*

**Helmut Thielicke, Being Human...Becoming Human**

### TOTAL and UNIVERSAL CORRUPTION

*Reformed Christianity has been known for its emphasis on the total depravity of man, but properly understood this doctrine is integral to all Evangelical Protestantism, and it also includes a significant measure of support within Roman Catholicism. It is a doctrine that has been insufficiently grasped, and too often its proponents have only added confusion by their exaggerated versions of it. The erroneous impression is given that the IMAGO DEI itself has been lost through sin so that the very substance of man is nothing but sin.*

*In the perspective of biblical faith total depravity can be thought of as having four meanings, all of which are valid.*

*First, it refers to the corruption at the very center of man's being, the heart, but this does not mean that man's humanity has ceased to exist.*

*Second, it signifies the infection in every part of man's being, though this is not to infer that this infection is evenly distributed or that nothing good remains in man.*

*Third, it denotes the total inability of sinful man to please God or come to Him unless moved by grace, though this does not imply that man is not free in other areas of his life.*

*Fourth, it includes the idea of the universal corruption of the human race, despite the fact that some peoples and cultures manifest this corruption much less than others.*

**Donald Bloesch, Essentials of Evangelical Theology**

### **BCP-Second Sunday after Christmas Day**

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature:  
Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son  
Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.  
*Amen*