

Session Three: The Reformation Period: 16th-18th Centuries

16th Century

1. The date usually given to the beginning of the Reformation is 1517, when an Augustinian monk named **Martin Luther** posted his famous 95 theses [these are debate propositions concerning his “protest” of the Catholic teaching and practice]. Result: irresistible momentum.
2. Luther’s main “discovery” after studying Romans was that *salvation is by grace, through faith*. This led him to protest the sale of “indulgences.” He also believed that the Scriptures were the ultimate authority, not the Roman Catholic Church. He also wanted to dissolve monasteries and convents and insisted on the holiness of common life—i.e., non-monastic life. He was wildly popular.
3. Increasing tension followed between Protestants and Catholics—both with the rulers and with leaders such as Luther and **Erasmus** (still a Catholic).
4. Luther’s successor was **Phillip Melancthon**, more moderate than Luther. This difference later led to a division among the strict and moderate Lutherans.
5. Not all dissenters from the Roman Catholic Church followed Luther. **Ulrich Zwingli** and his successor, **John Calvin** (Switzerland) gave birth to the churches we now call “**Reformed**” and “**Presbyterian**.” Calvin was more moderate than Zwingli.
6. Calvin’s work, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, systematized Reformed theology, which accepted most of Luther but insisted more on the process of sanctification that is the necessary result of justification. They also emphasized social and political aspects of faith, and eventually led to revolutions in places such as Scotland, England, and Netherlands. **Above all, Calvin emphasized the sovereignty of God.**
7. Other “protesters” took more radical positions, and were known by their enemies as “**Anabaptists**”—or “re-baptizers.” Out of this wing came the **Mennonites** and other groups. They advocated that the church follow strict practices of the NT; thus they rejected the view of the church and society since the time of Constantine (4th century). They were pacifists.
8. In **England**, there was a different sort of reformation—a peculiar blend of Calvinism and ancient Catholic traditions of worship and church governance. *Known today at “Anglican” or “Episcopal.”*
9. In England, **Henry VIII** wanted an heir. The Pope would not annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, so Henry declared himself head of the church, had his marriage annulled, and was wed again.
10. His son was **Edward VI** (reigned briefly), succeeded by his half-sister, **Mary Tudor**—a Catholic. Known as “Bloody Mary.” She was succeeded by her half-sister, **Elizabeth**, who was a Protestant. A great time for Protestantism (the King James Bible was translated in 1611).
11. The **Roman Catholic Church** also underwent a reformation (1500s), partly as the result of the Protestant Reformation and partly due to its own inner dynamics (sometimes called Counter-Reformation by Protestants). *Most arguments against Protestants were developed during this time*. High point of the Roman Catholic reformation was the **Council of Trent** (1545-1563).

12. New **monastic orders** that emerged: Society of Jesus or **Jesuits**, founded by Ignatius of Loyola. Became the right arm of the papacy. Very missions minded; first to go to China. Corruption in papacy was eliminated. Also **Discalced Carmelites** (composed of nuns and friars; led by two prominent Spanish saints, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross).
13. The influence of **John Calvin** (1509-1564) and **Jacob Arminius** (1560-1609) is interesting as we trace their influence from their time to the present.
14. Main tenets of **Calvinism** (or Reform theology): **Total human depravity**; **Unconditional election**; **Limited atonement**; **Irresistible grace**; **Perseverance of the Saints**. –(it spells T-U-L-I-P)
15. Main tenets of **Arminianism**: **Free-will**; **Conditional election**; **Universal redemption**; the Holy Spirit can be resisted; **Falling from grace** (contested by some Arminianians).
16. Even though these beliefs have many things in common, they differ sharply over the doctrine of salvation (soteriology) and predestination, *even today in much of Evangelical theology*. [NOTE: For additional discussion, see pp. 3-6 of this **handout**.]

17th and 18th Centuries

17. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the strong religious convictions of various groups among the Catholics and Protestants led to bloody wars which decimated the population (the most famous was the **Thirty Years' War** (1618-1648). The result: guarantee of religious freedom, but only for Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed.
18. In **France**, the earlier policy of religious freedom was abandoned. Many French Protestants (known as **Huguenots**) left France; others stayed.
19. In **England**, the **Puritan Revolution** led to long civil wars. Puritans insisted that the church must be purified from all that was not biblical (i.e., Catholicism). Tensions between the kings and Parliament increased. Eventually, Parliament won and, **Oliver Cromwell** came into power. Meanwhile, the Puritans began to divide into factions. This, in turn, brought an anti-Puritan reaction. The eventual result was reasonable tolerance in England, as long as one held to *Thirty-Nine Articles* of Anglicanism.
20. In **Scotland**, the *Westminster Confession* was adopted, which became the foundation of Presbyterianism, the religion of the realm.
21. “*All of these wars were fueled by the inflexible spirit of various orthodoxies—Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed. For each of these orthodoxies, every detail of doctrine was of the greatest importance, and therefore not even the least deviation from the most strict orthodoxy should be allowed. The result was not only the wars that have been mentioned, but also an endless series of debates among Catholics, Lutherans, and the Reformed, all of whom found it difficult to reach an agreement even within their own traditions.*” Justo Gonzales, *Church History: An Essential Guide*, p.79
22. The two high points of Reform theology in this period are: **Synod of Dort** (1618-19), which condemned Arminianism (too much active participation of the believer in salvation); and the **Assembly of Westminster** (resulting in *Confession of*

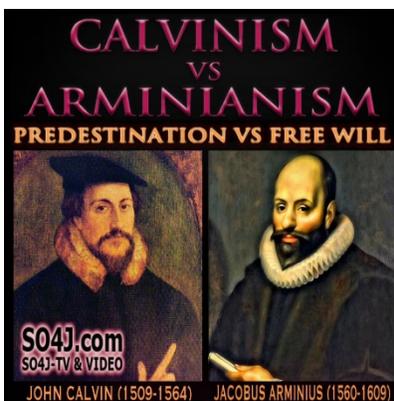
- Westminster*), setting Presbyterian standards in Scotland. This Confession was a point of sharp controversy in the Parliament between England and Scotland.
23. One of the reactions to such strict orthodoxy was the growth of **rationalism**. As a result of the works of men like Descartes, Spinoza, Hume, and John Locke, the idea developed that only a Christianity that could prove itself to be eminently rational was worthy of belief. (Reason was not as objective as they thought, after all.) *The American Restoration Movement was profoundly influenced by the rationalists.*
 24. Another consequence to the rigid orthodoxy was the belief that experience and obedience were more important than orthodox doctrine. The result was the beginning of the **Pietist Movement** (e.g. Moravians) and **Methodism**, founded by **John and Charles Wesley**. They intended to stay within the Church of England, emphasizing personal faith, but they eventually separated as an independent church.
 25. **Methodism** grew mostly among the masses in England who suffered the consequences of the Industrial Revolution. It later spread to the US, where it grew quite strong, especially on the frontier (remember the Methodist circuit riders).
 26. Still others, unhappy with orthodoxy and pietism, sought God through the **Spiritualist** view—no longer in the church or the community of believers, but in the inner private life. A leader was **George Fox**, who taught about the “inner light” or Holy Spirit, set against the authority of the church and scriptures. Result: **Quakers**.
 27. Still others decided to leave Europe and seek where they could practice their own beliefs essential to the Gospel. They were intolerant of any who disagreed with them. **Such was the origin of the British colonies in New England**. Among them were Puritans, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Anabaptists, etc.

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***Extra Added Feature:** [Source: <http://so4j.com/calvinism-vs-arminianism-compare>]

[A little advice—there are as many different variations and hues of Calvinism and Arminianism as there are weeds in your garden. Soooo, this chart is simply furnished to give you a general idea of the differences in the two approaches to the Scriptures and to salvation. If you are interested in these ideas I strongly encourage you to read some additional material.-RM]

CALVINISM VS ARMINIANISM COMPARISON CHART



The Five Points of Calvinism, also known as the acronym **T.U.L.I.P.** and the Five Points of Arminianism

CALVINISM

T - Total Inability or Total Depravity

Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not - indeed he cannot - choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ - it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation - it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.

CALVINISM

U - Unconditional Election

God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response of obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God's

ARMINIANISM

Free-Will or Human Ability

Although human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but He does not interfere with man's freedom. Each sinner possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power to either cooperate with God's Spirit and be regenerated or resist God's grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the Spirit's assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe, for faith is man's act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinner's gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation.

ARMINIANISM

Conditional Election

God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world was based upon His foreseeing that they would respond to His call. He selected only those whom He knew would of themselves freely believe the gospel. Election therefore was determined by or conditioned upon what man would do. The faith which God foresaw and upon which He based His choice was not given to the sinner by God (it was

choice. Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

CALVINISM

L- Limited Atonement/ Particular Redemption

Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, therefore guaranteeing their salvation.

CALVINISM

I - Irresistible Grace or the Efficacious Call of the Spirit

In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by man's will, nor is He dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.

CALVINISM

P - Perseverance of the Saints

not created by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit) but resulted solely from man's will. It was left entirely up to man as to who would believe and therefore as to who would be elected unto salvation. God chose those whom He knew would, of their own free will, choose Christ. Thus the sinner's choice of Christ, not God's choice of the sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

ARMINIANISM

Universal Redemption or General Atonement

Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone. Although Christ died for all men and for every man, only those who believe on Him are saved. His death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins. Christ's redemption becomes effective only if man chooses to accept it.

ARMINIANISM

The Holy Spirit Can Be Effectually Resisted

The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation; He does all that He can to bring every sinner to salvation. But inasmuch as man is free, he can successfully resist the Spirit's call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner until he believes; faith (which is man's contribution) proceeds and makes possible the new birth. Thus, man's free will limits the Spirit in the application of Christ's saving work. The Holy Spirit can only draw to Christ those who allow Him to have His way with them. Until the sinner responds, the Spirit cannot give life. God's grace, therefore, is not invincible; it can be, and often is, resisted and thwarted by man.

ARMINIANISM

Falling from Grace

