

Protestant Orthodoxy in the 17th Century

I. “Protestant Scholasticism”

A. Common Charge

1. Label (often pejorative) for Lutheran & Reformed theology after first generation
2. Named for Catholic, medieval Scholasticism—Aristotelian logic applied to theology using Scripture, tradition, reason (e.g., Aquinas)
3. Charged that the Protestant scholastics, by their method, went beyond the reformers (e.g., “Calvin against the Calvinists”)
4. Claim that extensive use of reason paved the way for rationalism in the Enlightenment

B. The Approach

1. Materials
 - a. Scripture supremely
 - b. Also relied on reason
 - c. Secondarily, confessions of faith
 - d. Did not rely on tradition as much as medieval Scholastics
2. Method: Thorough systematization of theology, working out minute details
3. Goals
 - a. Build systems of doctrine
 - b. Answer speculative questions not answered in Scripture

II. Lutheran Orthodoxy

A. Characteristics

1. From the Formula of Concord
2. Baptismal regeneration became pronounced
3. A major stress on verbal, plenary inspiration (to the point of dictation)
4. Staunch opposition to Reformed theology

B. George Calixtus and Syncretistic Controversy

1. To the Lutherans what the Arminian controversy was to Calvinists—the great challenge to orthodoxy which defined much debate in the 17th century
2. Calixtus’s Views
 - a. Distinguished between essentials (or fundamentals) and nonessentials (or non-fundamentals) as a basis of closer Christian cooperation
 - b. Essential: Teaching necessary for salvation
 - c. Thought the Apostles’ Creed and “the consensus of the first five centuries” provided a basis for determining the essentials
 - d. Believed in an “inner union” among all churches, including the RCC, hence the name “syncretism,” for mixing or joining of faiths
3. Reaction
 - a. Lutheran orthodoxy pretty unanimously rejected Calixtus
 - b. Argued that some issues are secondary but Lutheran theology must be seen as a whole in testimony to the truth
 - c. Helps explain even contemporary conservative Lutheran rejection of Fundamentalism with its teaching of fundamentals and non-fundamentals

III. Reformed Orthodoxy

A. Disputed Doctrines: “Calvin vs. the Calvinists”

1. Double predestination
 - a. Often considered one of Beza’s changes from Calvin

- b. God both actively saves (*election*) & actively damns (*reprobation*)
 - c. Many Calvinists say Calvin taught *preterition*, “passing by” of the non-elect
 - d. Evidence suggests that Calvin taught double predestination; Beza et al., although more definite, arguably just filled in Calvin’s outlines
2. Infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism
 - a. Question of the order of the decrees of election
 - 1) Did God decree to permit the fall and then to elect the saved from fallen mankind (infralapsarian)?
 - 2) Did He decree to elect a certain number to salvation and then decree to permit the fall (supralapsarian)?
 - 3) Another way of looking at it, did God intend to glorify Himself in predestination (supralapsarian) or in creation (infralapsarian)?
 - b. Beza & many at the Synod of Dort were supralapsarian
 - c. Appears to be a teaching beyond Calvin (although hard to prove that Calvin opposed it), but not an article of faith among Calvinists
 3. Limited atonement
 - a. Question of extent or intent of Christ’s atonement
 - b. Later Calvinists clearly taught
 - c. Difficult interpreting Calvin on an issue he did not clearly address
 4. Inerrancy of Scripture
 - a. Claim that Calvin never taught inerrancy but thought the Bible infallible only in doctrinal teaching
 - b. Inerrancy claimed as an innovation of later theologians (notably Francis Turretin)
 - c. Later Calvinists more clearly inerrantist
- B. Noted Theologians
1. Theodore Beza
 - a. Leader of the Genevan church after Calvin’s death
 - b. Known for leadership of Geneva Academy & work in biblical manuscripts & Bible translation
 - c. Major figure in “Calvin vs. the Calvinists” debate
 - 1) Critics: Built logical systems that went beyond Calvin & Scripture
 - 2) Defenders: Worked within the basic Calvinistic framework, addressing and resolving issues
 2. Zacharias Ursinus
 - a. Author of *Heidelberg Catechism*, main confession of German Reformed Church
 - b. Blends elements of Calvin, Zwingli, & even Luther
 - c. Known for warm, devotional, personal tone
 3. Johannes Cocceius: Father of Covenant Theology
 - a. Theologian in Germany & Netherlands
 - b. Roots of Covenant Theology in Zwingli
 - c. Two covenants
 - 1) Covenant of Works: God’s covenant w/ Adam to confirm him in holiness & life if he passed his probation
 - 2) Covenant of Grace: God’s promise of life to the elect, through Christ’s merits, by faith in Christ
 - 3) Some suggest a Covenant of Mercy divided into two components

- a) Covenant of Redemption: Covenant between the Father & the Son to accomplish redemption
- b) Covenant of Grace: Application of the covenant of redemption in time by God to His people
- d. Federal headship
 - 1) Adam the head of the race as its representative in covenant of works
 - 2) Effects of his sin pass to all posterity
- e. Taught a continuity between Israel and the church
- 4. Moïse Amyraut
 - a. French Calvinist (School of Saumur)
 - b. “Amyraldianism” (hypothetical universalism)
 - 1) God wills that all be saved
 - 2) Christ’s death makes the salvation of all possible
 - 3) All have natural ability to repent but are hampered by a moral inability
 - 4) God gives grace to elect to remove the moral inability
- 5. Francis Turretin
 - a. Great theologian of Geneva (mid-1600s)—most thorough systematization of Reformed faith
 - b. Scripture
 - 1) Defended absolute inerrancy of Scripture
 - 2) Strong view of the divine preservation of Scripture
 - c. Systematic theology *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* affected America through Princeton Seminary
- 6. John Gill: Baptist, discussed later

IV. Calvinist-Arminian Controversy

A. Background

- 1. James Arminius
 - a. Dutch theologian who questioned tenets of Calvinistic theology
 - b. Sparked one of the major divisions in modern Protestant theology.
- 2. Arminian party (after Arminius died) drew up a five-point “Remonstrance” (protest) in 1610
- 3. Synod of Dort (1618-19)
 - a. Dutch church called an int’l. synod of Reformed theologians to Dort (Dordrecht)
 - b. Condemned Arminianism and established “5 Points of Calvinism”
 - c. Later Arminians tended toward more liberal views
 - d. John Wesley moved Arminianism toward a more biblical basis

B. Five Points of Controversy (TULIP)

- 1. Total Depravity
 - a. Calvinists prefer “total inability”: Man totally unable to respond to God unless God gives them grace to repent & believe (grace only for the elect)
 - b. Arminians fall in two camps.
 - 1) Classical Arminians (such as those at Dort, but not Arminius): Man retains some ability after the fall to repent and believe
 - 2) Wesleyan Arminians: Fallen man has no ability to repent & believe but God has given grace to all to repent and believe
- 2. Unconditional Election

- a. Calvinists: God chose who would be saved apart from any foreknowledge of their actions or character (attempt to safeguard the sole sufficiency of God in salvation)
- b. Arminians: God elects on the condition of His foreknowledge of who would repent & believe (attempt to safeguard the free will given by God to man)
- 3. Limited Atonement
 - a. Calvinists prefer “particular redemption”: Christ’s atonement was intended to pay for the sins of the elect
 - b. Arminians: Christ died for the sins of everyone but only by one’s faith can one receive the benefit of that sacrifice
 - c. Both sides deny universalism (everyone will be saved); question is what is the design, purpose, or intent of the atonement
- 4. Irresistible Grace
 - a. Calvinists: God’s purpose will ultimately be fulfilled & the elect will be saved
 - b. Arminians: God allows man free will capable of resisting His saving purpose (so no worship or service is coerced)
- 5. Perseverance of the Saints
 - a. Calvinists: Elect can never fall from grace & be lost
 - b. Arminians: A believer, through a complete apostasy, may fall from grace.
 - 1) Normally hold such an apostasy irredeemable—one cannot be “saved again”
 - 2) Arminius himself said to have been uncertain on this point

V. Puritanism

A. Background

- 1. Began in late 1500s in reaction to the Elizabethan Settlement, wanting a thorough reformation of the Church of England
- 2. Allied w/ Parliament against the Royalists in the English Civil War (1642-48)
- 3. Westminster Assembly
 - a. Held during the Civil War to define a pattern for the reformation of the Church of England (w/ Scottish involvement)
 - b. Produced Westminster Standards (confession of faith, catechisms, etc.)
- 4. Both English & American branches of Puritanism

B. Teachings

- 1. Essentially (though not universally) Calvinistic
- 2. Covenant—a central idea to Puritan theology
 - a. Held to Covenant Theology
 - b. Saw church as a covenanted body
 - c. Political covenant
 - 1) An essential political element (between God & people and among people)
 - 2) Believed the moral law had a universal application & Israel’s civil law set pattern for human government.
 - 3) Example: Mayflower Compact
 - d. Halfway Covenant
 - 1) Pattern among New England Congregational Puritans
 - 2) Regenerate church membership: One could not become a full church member until he “owned the covenant” (testified of his own conversion)
 - 3) Infant baptism
 - a) Only full members could present their children for baptism

- b) Those who could not testify of conversion were allowed to have their children baptized as “halfway members”
 - 3. Vital piety
 - a. Stressed importance of a vital conversion experience—a sign of election
 - b. Emphasized the importance of an active Christian life
 - c. Produced devotional classics: Baxter’s *Saints Everlasting Rest*, Taylor’s *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*, Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*
 - 4. The Church
 - a. Polity
 - 1) Presbyterian (England)
 - 2) Congregational (New England)
 - b. Desire for a pure church (“Puritan”)
 - 1) Purified of “Romish” elements
 - 2) Pure by a regenerate membership
 - a) Some went the route of separatism (Pilgrims, Baptists)
 - b) Others sought a purified state church in which all attended but only the regenerate could be members
 - 5. Christianized society
 - a. Puritans desired a “Christian state”
 - b. Examples
 - 1) Cromwell’s England
 - 2) New England: “city set on a hill” & “Holy Commonwealth”
- C. Leading Puritan Theologians
1. William Perkins
 - a. First outstanding Puritan theologian & teacher
 - b. *A Golden Chain*: Puritan view of salvation (election & reprobation)
 2. William Ames
 - a. Polemicist against Anglicanism and Arminianism
 - b. *Marrow of Theology*: Influential Puritan theology text
 3. John Cotton
 - a. Leading New England Puritan
 - b. Father of Congregationalism (“New England Way”)
 4. John Owen
 - a. Denominationalist: Helped write Savoy Declaration (Congregationalist confession)
 - b. Exegete: Bible commentator (Hebrews)
 - c. Theologian: Work on the Holy Spirit
 - d. Calvinist: *Death of Death in the Death of Christ* → Defense of particular redemption
- D. Dutch Variant: *Nadere Reformatie*
1. Translated: “Second,” “Continuing,” or “Further Reformation”
 2. A “Dutch Puritanism”
 - a. Cross-fertilization resulting from tolerant Dutch policies
 - b. Same emphasis on practical piety
 3. Character
 - a. Adding subjective aspect of faith to the objective
 - b. Response to nominal faith in state-preferred church—sound doctrine and piety

- c. Distinct emphasis on theological writing and publication
- d. Impact on later Pietism and Evangelical Awakenings
- 4. Examples
 - a. Wilhelms à Brakel: *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, balancing doctrinal, ethical, & practical aspects of Christian
 - b. Theodore Frelinghuysen: early leader of Great Awakening