

Calvinism, Lutheranism and Arminianism

Protestant beliefs about salvation			
This table summarizes the classical views of three Protestant beliefs about salvation.			
Topic	Calvinism	Lutheranism	Arminianism
Human will	Total depravity. Humanity possesses "free will", but it is in bondage to sin, until it is "transformed".	Original Sin. Humanity possesses free will in regard to "goods and possessions", but is sinful by nature and unable to contribute to its own salvation.	Total depravity: Humanity possesses freedom from necessity, but not "freedom from sin" unless enabled by "prevenient grace"
Election	Unconditional election.	Unconditional election.	Conditional election in view of foreseen faith or unbelief.
Justification and atonement	Justification by faith alone. Various views regarding the extent of the atonement.	Justification for all men, completed at Christ's death and effective through faith alone.	Justification made possible for all through Christ's death, but only completed upon choosing faith in Jesus.
Conversion	Monergistic, through the means of grace, irresistible.	Monergistic, through the means of grace, resistible.	Synergistic, resistible due to the common grace of free will. However, irresistible conversion is possible.
Perseverance and apostasy	Perseverance of the saints: the eternally elect in Christ will certainly persevere in faith.	Falling away is possible, but God gives gospel assurance.	Preservation is conditional upon continued faith in Christ; with the possibility of a final apostasy.

Calvinism

Calvinism (also called the **Reformed tradition**, **Reformed Christianity**, **Reformed Protestantism**, or the **Reformed faith**) is a major branch of Protestantism that follows the theological tradition and forms of Christian practice set down by John Calvin and other Reformation-era theologians. The Calvinist form of Protestantism is widely thought to have had a major impact on the formation of the modern world.

Calvinists broke from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century. Calvinists differ from Lutherans (another major branch of the Reformation) on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, theories of worship, the purpose and meaning of baptism, and the use of God's law for believers, among other things.

The namesake of the movement, French reformer John Calvin, renounced Roman Catholicism and embraced Protestant views in the late 1520s or early 1530s, as the earliest notions of later Reformed tradition were already espoused by Huldrych Zwingli. The movement was first called *Calvinism*, referring to John Calvin, by

Lutherans who opposed it. Many within the tradition find it either an indescriptive or an inappropriate term and would prefer the word **Reformed** to be used instead.

The Reformed tradition is largely represented by the Continental Reformed, Presbyterian, Evangelical Anglican, Congregationalist, and Reformed Baptist denominational families. Several forms of ecclesiastical polity are exercised by a group of Reformed churches, including presbyterian, congregationalist, and some episcopalian. The biggest association is the World Communion of Reformed Churches with more than 100 million members in 211 member denominations around the world.¹

Etymology

Calvinism is named after John Calvin. It was first used by a Lutheran theologian in 1552. It was a common practice of the Roman Catholic Church to name what it viewed as heresy after its founder. Despite its negative connotation, this designation became increasingly popular in order to distinguish Calvinists from Lutherans and from newer Protestant branches that emerged later.

History

First-generation Reformed theologians include Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531), Martin Bucer (1491–1551), Wolfgang Capito (1478–1541), John Oecolampadius (1482–1531), and Guillaume Farel (1489–1565). Scripture was also viewed as a unified whole, which led to a covenantal theology of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper as visible signs of the covenant of grace. Another Reformed distinctive present in these theologians was their denial of the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's supper. John Calvin (1509–64), Heinrich Bullinger (1504–75), Wolfgang Musculus (1497–1563), Peter Martyr Vermigli (1500–62), and Andreas Hyperius (1511–64) belong to the second generation of Reformed theologians.

The 1549 **Consensus Tigurinus** brought together those who followed Zwingli and Bullinger's **memorialist theology** (*Memorialism is the belief held by some Christian denominations that the elements of bread and wine (or juice) in the Eucharist (more often referred to as "the Lord's Supper" by memorialists) are purely symbolic representations of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the feast being established only or primarily as a commemorative ceremony. The term comes from the Gospel of Luke 22:19: "Do this in remembrance of me", and the attendant interpretation that the Lord's Supper's chief purpose is to help the participant remember Jesus and his sacrifice on the Cross.*) of the Lord's supper, which taught that the supper simply serves as a reminder of Christ's death, and Calvin's view that the supper serves as a **means of grace with Christ actually present**, though spiritually rather than bodily.

Spread through the world

Although much of Calvin's work was in Geneva, his publications spread his ideas of a *correctly* Reformed church to many parts of Europe. Most settlers in the American Mid-Atlantic and New England were Calvinists, including the English Puritans, the French Huguenots and Dutch settlers of New Amsterdam (New York), and the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians of the Appalachian back country. Nonconforming Protestants, Puritans, Separatists, Independents, English religious groups coming out of the English Civil War, and other English dissenters not satisfied with the degree to which the Church of England had been reformed, held overwhelmingly Reformed views.

Theology

In Reformed theology, the Word of God takes several forms. Jesus Christ himself is the Word Incarnate. The prophecies about him said to be found in the Old Testament and the ministry of the apostles who saw him and

communicated his message are also the Word of God. Further, the preaching of ministers about God is the very Word of God because God is considered to be speaking through them. God also speaks through human writers in the Bible, which is composed of texts set apart by God for self-revelation. Reformed theologians emphasize the Bible as a uniquely important means by which God communicates with people. People gain knowledge of God from the Bible which cannot be gained in any other way. Reformed theologians believe that God communicates knowledge of himself to people through the Word of God. People are not able to know anything about God except through this self-revelation. Speculation about anything which God has not revealed through his Word is not warranted.

TWO MAJOR VIEWS: Reformed theologians affirm that the Bible is true, but differences emerge among them over the meaning and extent of its truthfulness, *Conservative followers of the Princeton theologians take the view that the Bible is true and inerrant, or incapable of error or falsehood, in every place.* This view is very similar to that of Catholic orthodoxy as well as modern Evangelicalism. Another view, influenced by the teaching of Karl Barth and neo-orthodoxy, is found in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Confession of 1967. *Those who take this view believe the Bible to be the primary source of our knowledge of God, but also that some parts of the Bible may be false, not witnesses to Christ, and not normative for today's church.* In this view, Christ is the revelation of God, and the scriptures witness to this revelation rather than being the revelation itself.

There are several details as to what the exact theology should be, who God is, who Christ is, what is sin, what is salvation, and what is predestination. These arguments of points of contention differ from region and era over the last several hundred years.

Five points of Calvinism- "TULIP" redirects here. Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace and Perseverance of the saint. These were cover under the REFORMED religion. See that for detailed reference.

Calvin agreed with Martin Luther on justification by faith and the sole authority of Scripture. On the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, he took a position between the radical Swiss and the Lutheran view. Thus, he believed that the body of Christ was not present everywhere but that his spirit was universal and that there was a genuine communion with the risen Lord. Calvin likewise took a middle view on music and art. *He favored congregational singing of the Psalms, which became a characteristic practice of the Huguenots in France and the Presbyterians in Scotland and the New World.* Calvin rejected the images of saints and the crucifix (that is, the image of the body of Christ upon the cross) but allowed a plain cross. *These modifications do not, however, refute the generalization that Calvinism was largely opposed to art and music in the service of religion but not in the secular sphere.*

In contrast to Luther, Calvin began his Institutes not with justification by faith but with the knowledge of God. Luther found refuge from the terror of God's dispensations in the mercy of Christ. Calvin could more calmly contemplate the frightfulness of God's judgments because they would not descend upon the elect. While Luther saw no way of knowing who were the elect, Calvin had certain approximate and attainable tests. For Calvin there were three tests: the profession of faith; *a rigorously disciplined Christian deportment; and a love of the sacraments, which meant the Lord's Supper, since infant baptism was not to be repeated.* *Persons who could meet these three tests could assume their election and stop worrying.*

While Lutheranism was largely confined to parts of Germany and to Scandinavia, Calvinism spread into England, Scotland, France, the Netherlands, the English-speaking colonies of North America, and parts of Germany and central Europe. This expansion began during Calvin's lifetime and was encouraged by him. Religious refugees poured into Geneva, especially from France during the 1550s as the French government became increasingly intolerant but also from England, Scotland, Italy, and other parts of Europe into which Calvinism had spread. Calvin welcomed them, trained many of them as ministers, sent them back to their countries of origin to spread the Gospel, and then supported them with letters of encouragement and advice. Geneva thus became the center of an international movement and a model for churches elsewhere. John Knox, the Calvinist leader of Scotland, described Geneva as "the most perfect school of Christ that ever was on the earth since the days of the Apostles."

Lutheranism

Lutheranism is one of the largest branches of Protestantism that identifies with the teachings of Martin Luther, a 16th-century German reformer whose efforts to reform the theology and practice of the church launched the Protestant Reformation. During the Reformation Lutheranism became the state religion of numerous states of Northern Europe, especially in northern Germany and the Nordic countries, Lutheran clergy became civil servants and the Lutheran churches became part of the state.

The divide centered primarily on two points: the proper source of authority in the church, often called the formal principle of the Reformation, and the doctrine of justification, often called the material principle of Lutheran theology. *Lutheranism advocates a doctrine of justification "by Grace alone through faith alone on the basis of Scripture alone", the doctrine that scripture is the final authority on all matters of faith.* This is in contrast to the belief of the Roman Catholic Church, defined at the Council of Trent, concerning authority coming from both the Scriptures and Tradition. Unlike Calvinism, Lutherans retain many of the liturgical practices and sacramental teachings of the pre-Reformation Church, with a particular emphasis on the Lord's Supper. *Lutheran theology differs from Reformed theology in Christology, divine grace, the purpose of God's Law, the concept of perseverance of the saints, and predestination. Unlike Catholicism, the Lutheran Church does not believe that tradition is a carrier of the "Word of God", or that only the communion of the Bishop of Rome has been entrusted to interpret the "Word of God".*

Etymology

The name Lutheran originated as a derogatory term used against Luther by German Scholastic theologian Dr. Johann Maier von Eck during the Leipzig Debate in July 1519. Martin Luther always disliked the term *Lutheran*, preferring the term *Evangelical*, which was derived from a Greek word meaning "good news", i.e. "Gospel". The followers of John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli, and other theologians linked to the Reformed tradition also used that term. To distinguish the two evangelical groups, others began to refer to the two groups as ***Evangelical Lutheran*** and ***Evangelical Reformed***. As time passed by, the word ***Evangelical*** was dropped. Lutherans themselves began to use the term *Lutheran* in the middle of the 16th century, in order to distinguish themselves from other groups such as the *Anabaptists* and *Calvinists*.

History

Lutheranism spread through all of Scandinavia during the 16th century, as the monarch of Denmark–Norway (also ruling Iceland and the Faroe Islands) and the monarch of Sweden (also ruling Finland) adopted Lutheranism. Through Baltic-German and Swedish rule, Lutheranism also spread into Estonia and Latvia. Since 1520, regular Lutheran services have been held in Copenhagen. The first complete Bible in Danish was based on Martin Luther's translation into German. It was published in 1550. The Reformation in Sweden began with Olaus and Laurentius Petri, brothers who took the Reformation to Sweden after studying in Germany. They led Gustav Vasa, elected king in 1523, to Lutheranism.

The middle 16th century found many battles fought over the correct version of Lutheranism. Wars between the different sects occurred with even the secular governments getting involved. This finally ended with the resolution of the issues in the *Formula of Concord*. Large numbers of politically and religiously influential leaders met together, debated, and resolved these topics on the basis of Scripture, resulting in the Formula, which over 8,000 leaders signed. The *Book of Concord* replaced earlier, incomplete collections of doctrine, unifying all German Lutherans with identical doctrine and beginning the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy.

Calvinism versus Arminianism

Calvinism and Arminianism are two systems of theology that attempt to explain the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in the matter of salvation. Calvinism is named for John Calvin, a French theologian who lived from 1509-1564. Arminianism is named for Jacobus Arminius, a Dutch theologian who lived from 1560-1609. Both systems can be summarized with five points. Calvinism holds to the total depravity of man while Arminianism holds to partial depravity. Calvinism's doctrine of total depravity states that every aspect of humanity is corrupted by sin; therefore, human beings are unable to come to God on their own accord. Partial depravity states that every aspect of humanity is tainted by sin, but not to the extent that human beings are unable to place faith in God of their own accord. Note: classical Arminianism rejects "partial depravity" and holds a view very close to Calvinistic "total depravity" (although the extent and meaning of that depravity are debated in Arminian circles). ***In general, Arminians believe there is an "intermediate" state between total depravity and salvation. In this state, made possible by prevenient grace, the sinner is being drawn to Christ and has the God-given ability to choose salvation.***

Calvinism includes the belief that election is unconditional, while Arminianism believes in conditional election. Unconditional election is the view that God elects individuals to salvation based entirely on His will, not on anything inherently worthy in the individual. Conditional election states that God elects individuals to salvation based on His foreknowledge of who will believe in Christ unto salvation, thereby on the condition that the individual chooses God.

Calvinism sees the atonement as limited, while Arminianism sees it as unlimited. This is the most controversial of the five points. Limited atonement is the belief that Jesus only died for the elect. Unlimited atonement is the belief that Jesus died for all, but that His death is not effectual until a person receives Him by faith.

Calvinism includes the belief that God's grace is irresistible, while Arminianism says that an individual can resist the grace of God. Irresistible grace argues that when God calls a person to salvation, that person will inevitably come to salvation. Resistible grace states that God calls all to salvation, but that many people resist and reject this call.

Calvinism holds to perseverance of the saints while Arminianism holds to conditional salvation. Perseverance of the saints refers to the concept that a person who is elected by God will persevere in faith and will not permanently deny Christ or turn away from Him. Conditional salvation is the view that a believer in Christ can, of his/her own free will, turn away from Christ and thereby lose salvation. Note - many Arminians deny "conditional salvation" and instead hold to "eternal security."

Arminianism

Arminianism is a branch of Protestantism based on the theological ideas of the Dutch Reformed theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609) and his historic supporters known as Remonstrants. His teachings held to the five solae of the Reformation, but they were distinct from particular teachings of Martin Luther, Huldrych Zwingli, John Calvin, and other Protestant Reformers.

Dutch Arminianism was originally articulated in the Remonstrance (1610), a theological statement signed by 45 ministers and submitted to the States General of the Netherlands. The Synod of Dort (1618–19) was called by the States General to consider the Five Articles of Remonstrance. These articles asserted that

1. Salvation (and condemnation on the day of judgment) was conditioned by the graciously enabled faith (or unbelief) of man;
2. The Atonement is qualitatively adequate for all men, "yet that no one actually enjoys [experiences] this forgiveness of sins, except the believer ..." and thus is limited to only those who trust in Christ;
3. "That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free will", and unaided by the Holy Spirit, no person is able to respond to God's will;
4. The (Christian) Grace "of God is the beginning, continuance, and accomplishment of any good", yet man may resist the Holy Spirit; and

5. Believers are able to resist sin through Grace, and Christ will keep them from falling; but whether they are beyond the possibility of ultimately forsaking God or "becoming devoid of grace ... must be more particularly determined from the Scriptures."

Many Christian denominations have been influenced by Arminian views on the will of man being freed by Grace prior to regeneration, notably the Baptists in the 17th century,^[4] the Methodists in the 18th century and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the 19th century. Some assert that Universalists and Unitarians in the 18th and 19th centuries were theologically linked with Arminianism.

The two systems of Calvinism and Arminianism share both history and many doctrines, and the history of Christian theology. Arminianism is related to Calvinism historically. However, because of their differences over the doctrines of divine predestination and election, many people view these schools of thought as opposed to each other. *The distinction is whether God allows His desire to save all to be resisted by an individual's will (in the Arminian doctrine) or if God only desires to save some people, and that his grace is irresistible to those God chooses to save.*

History

Jacobus Arminius was a Dutch pastor and theologian in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. He was taught by Theodore Beza, Calvin's hand-picked successor, but after examination of the scriptures, he rejected his teacher's theology that it is God who unconditionally elects some for salvation. Instead Arminius proposed that the election of God was *of believers*, thereby making it conditional on faith. Arminius's views were challenged by the Dutch Calvinists.

Arminius died before a national synod could occur.

Arminius's followers, not wanting to adopt their leader's name, called themselves the **Remonstrants**. Arminius died before he could satisfy Holland's State General's request for a 14-page paper outlining his views. The Remonstrants replied in his stead crafting the Five articles of Remonstrance, in which they express their points of divergence with the stricter Calvinism.

After some political maneuvering, the Dutch Calvinists were able to convince Prince Maurice of Nassau to deal with the situation. Maurice systematically removed Arminian magistrates from office and called a national synod at Dordrecht. This Synod of Dort was open primarily to Dutch Calvinists while the Arminians were excluded, with Calvinist representatives from other countries, and in 1618 published a condemnation of Arminius and his followers as heretics.

Arminians across Holland were removed from office, imprisoned, banished, and sworn to silence. Twelve years later Holland officially granted Arminianism protection as a religion, although animosity between Arminians and Calvinists continued.

- **Arminianism is Pelagian (or Semi-Pelagian), denying original sin and total depravity**—No system of Arminianism founded on Arminius or Wesley denies original sin or total depravity, both Arminius and Wesley *strongly* affirmed that man's basic condition is one in which he cannot be righteous, understand God, or seek God.

Many Calvinist critics of Arminianism, both historically and currently, claim that Arminianism condones, accepts, or even explicitly supports Pelagianism or semi-Pelagianism. Arminius referred to Pelagianism as "the grand falsehood". Most Arminians reject all accusations of Pelagianism; nonetheless, primarily due to Calvinist opponents, the two terms remain intertwined in popular usage.

- **Arminianism denies Jesus' substitutionary payment for sins**—Both Arminius and Wesley believed in the necessity and sufficiency of Christ's atonement through penal substitution (*is a theory of the atonement within Christian theology, which argues that Christ, by his own sacrificial choice, was punished (penalized) in the place of sinners (substitution), thus satisfying the demands of justice so God can justly forgive sin*).

Arminius held that God's justice was satisfied ***individually***, while Hugo Grotius and many of Wesley's followers taught that it was satisfied ***governmentally***. Further research can be made on these two points as the discussion is a century's old problem. This will not be covered in this article any further.

Baptists The Baptist movement originated with Thomas Helwys, who left his mentor John Smyth (who had moved into shared belief and other distinctives of the Dutch Waterlander Mennonites of Amsterdam) and returned to London to start the first English Baptist Church in 1611. The General Baptists encapsulated their Arminian views in numerous confessions, the most influential of which was the Standard Confession of 1660. The London Confession of 1689 was later used by Calvinistic Baptists in America (called the Philadelphia Baptist Confession), whereas the Standard Confession of 1660 was used by the American heirs of the English General Baptists, who soon came to be known as Free Will Baptists.

Methodists The Methodist revival began in England with a group of men, including and brother Charles, as a movement within the Church of England in the 18th century. The Wesley brothers founded the "Holy Club" at the University of Oxford. John Wesley came under the influence of the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609). Arminius had rejected the Calvinist teaching that God had pre-ordained an elect number of people to eternal bliss while others perished eternally.

Methodist preachers focused particularly on evangelizing people who had been "neglected" by the established Church of England. Wesley and his assistant preachers organized the new converts into Methodist societies.

Current landscape

Advocates of both Arminianism and Calvinism find a home in many Protestant denominations, and sometimes both exist within the same denomination. Faiths leaning at least in part in the Arminian direction include Methodists, Free Will Baptists, Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, General Baptists, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Church of the Nazarene, The Wesleyan Church, The Salvation Army, Conservative Mennonites, Old Order Mennonites, Amish and Charismatics, including the Pentecostals.

Denominations leaning in the Calvinist direction are grouped as the Reformed churches and include Particular Baptists, Reformed Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists. The majority of Southern Baptists, including Billy Graham, accept Arminianism with an exception allowing for a doctrine of perseverance of the saints ("eternal security").