

Historical Theology: Salvation in the Reformation Era (AD 1500-1700)

3/22/23

Overview: the reformation era issues centered largely on scripture/authority and salvation with ramifications for ecclesiology (the church).

Key Figures and Their Stories:

Key Issues vs. Catholicism

Key Issues within Protestantism

Further Resources

Homework: <https://www.challies.com/articles/an-introduction-to-calvinism-arminianism-part-4/>

To prepare for next week: <https://jgduesing.com/theology-in-the-reformation-era-jason-g-duesing-on-the-church/>

For the semester:

Duesing, Jason and Nathan Finn. *Historical Theology For The Church*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2021.

Duesing, Jason. *Seven Summits in Church History*. Nashville, TN: Rainer Publishing, 2016.

Ferguson, Everett. *Church History, Volume One: From Christ to the Pre-Reformation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013.

Litfin, Bryan. *Getting to Know The Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.

Akin, Daniel, editor. *A Theology for the Church*. Nashville, TN: B&H, 2007.



Articles

Thought of this proverb recently as I pondered personal devotions. I had been speaking to people who were struggling with their devotions, who were sporadic at their best and plain uninterested at their worst. Some had tried and failed, tried again and failed again, tried a third time and thrown in the towel. Others (by their own assessment) had grown lazy or

An Introduction To Calvinism & Arminianism (Part 4) (<https://www.challies.com/articles/an-introduction-to-calvinism-arminianism-part-4/>)

November 28, 2003 (<https://www.challies.com/articles/an-introduction-to-calvinism-arminianism-part-4/>) • #arminianism (<https://www.challies.com/tag/arminianism/>) #calvinism (<https://www.challies.com/tag/calvinism/>) #theology (<https://www.challies.com/tag/theology/>)

This is part four of our series studying the differences between Calvinism and Arminianism. Please note that this is only a brief overview of a vast topic. A thorough discussion of this topic can (and often has) filled many books. At the conclusion of the series I will provide a list of helpful resources should you wish to pursue this study further.

Today we turn our attention to a comparison of the two views. I present this as a “quick and dirty” summary of the opposing views. Remember that not all Calvinists hold to all of the points I have listed below. Similarly, not all Arminians believe all of the points below.

Free Will

- The fall has seriously affected humans but has not left them completely spiritually helpless.
- Man is not enslaved to his nature
- Man has the ability to choose for or against God. Man can choose either good or evil as his will dictates.
- The Spirit assists man as he develops faith.
- Faith is man's act and a gift to God

Total Depravity

- The fall has left man completely unable to respond to God in any way. Man is spiritually dead.
- Man is enslaved to his nature
- Man has free will within the bounds of his nature. Since man is in a fallen state, he can never choose for God unless the Spirit has first regenerated him.
- The Spirit regenerates man and then gives him the faith Christ secured.
- Faith is God's act and a gift to man

Conditional Election Unconditional Election

- God chose certain people before the foundation of the world based on seeing that in the future they would respond to His call.
- Election is conditional on God seeing who would choose Him.
- The final cause of salvation is man choosing God.
- God chose certain people before the foundation of the world for His own reasons and not based on seeing who would respond to His call.
- Election is unconditional. God simply chose some and not others.
- The final cause of salvation is God choosing man.

Unlimited Atonement Limited Atonement

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ's death achieved the potential for man to be saved. • Christ died for every person who ever lived, but only saves those who believe. • Christ's death secured the potential for salvation and did not secure faith (which is man's work) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ's death effectually saved the elect. • Christ's death was only for the elect and not for the entire human race. • Christ's death secured salvation and faith |
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Obstructable Grace Irresistible Grace

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God never forces salvation upon anyone. • The Spirit woos people but they are free to accept or reject Him. • Faith allows the Spirit to do His work in man | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God gives the gift of salvation to His elect and they have no choice but to respond. • The Spirit regenerates people who are then given faith and must repent. • The Spirit does His work based on who God has predestined to eternal life |
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Falling From Grace Perseverance of the Saints

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because salvation is ultimately dependent on man, he can reject his salvation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because salvation is ultimately dependent on God, man can never lose salvation |
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As you see, the process of a person becoming saved is vastly different in each of the views. I have created a chart for each of the views to try to simplify the differences between them.

A Calvinist View of Salvation

Election

God foresaw man's fall and elected some to eternal life

Fall

Man fell into sin and his will became bound by his sinful nature

Outer Call

God calls everyone who hears the gospel to repent. This call is accepted only by the elect

Inner Call

God gives the elect an inner call to repentance which they are unable to reject

Regeneration

The Spirit regenerates the elect

Faith

The Spirit gives the elect faith that was obtained through Christ's death

Repentance

Based on the preceding work the elect have no choice but to repent

Justification

The elect are justified (made right) before God

An Arminian View of Salvation

Election

God foresaw man's fall and elected those He saw would repent

Fall

Man fell into sin and became sinful, but retained free will

Outer Call

God calls everyone who hears the gospel to repent. This call can be accepted or rejected by anyone

Spirit's Wooing

The Spirit woos people, "encouraging" them to believe

Faith

Man heeds the Spirit's wooing and develops faith

Regeneration

Based on man's faith, the Spirit performs His work of regeneration

Repentance

Man chooses to repent and accept Christ

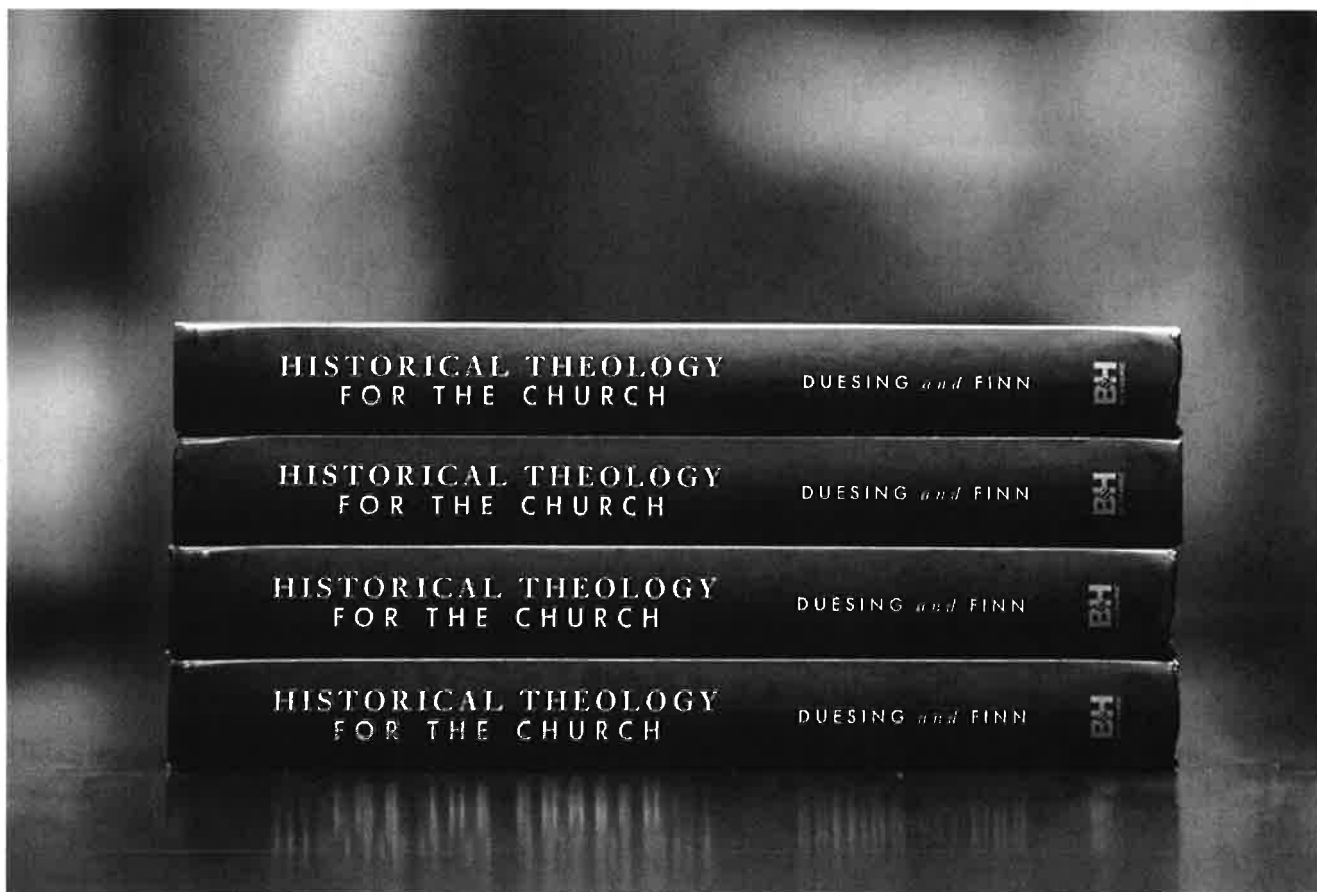
Justification

Man is justified (made right) before God

Next time we will wrap up the discussion with some conclusions and I will provide an explanation for the view to which I adhere.

You May Also Like

(<https://www.challies.com/articles/preaching-the-gospel-with-tulips-tricky-l-in-mind/>)



Theology in the Reformation Era: Jason G. Duesing on The Church

Uncategorized / By JGDuesing

Historical Theology for the Church is a new book from B&H Academic that treats the entire 2000 year history of Christianity with a focus on doctrinal development through major figures, events, and written works. By steering this work “for the church” this textbook shows the development of doctrine in history through congregations as well as provide a resource for contemporary congregations. The following is an excerpt from one of the contributing authors’ chapters.

Jason G. Duesing serves as professor of historical theology and as Provost at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Introduction

In the twentieth century, C. S. Lewis (1898–1963) advocated for a “mere” Christianity in the main, but the notion of mere-ness also washed upon the shores of his doctrine of the church. In his *Letters to Malcolm*, Lewis, an Anglican Protestant, followed the workings out of the English Reformation as he suggested a simplified liturgy, one in which the priest minimized the distractions, the pomp, and the obstacles for the people of God. The sentiment here of a mere ecclesiology captures well the initial spirit of the Reformers in the sixteenth century. Their reforms were driven by doctrinal change and motivated by a simplicity that pulled back layers of Roman complexity, especially in terms of the definition and practice of the church. Yet, as the Reformers focused on establishing their core *solas* in the church, over the ensuing decades their reforms of the doctrine of the church would vary in emphasis and thoroughness and lead to increased variance among their movements. As all Protestant and Free Church traditions trace their origins to the Reformation, this era serves as ground zero for the historical formation of ecclesiology and thus serves as a helpful era of study.

Historical Overview

As previous chapters have presented, with the advent of the Reformation era, the *conciliarists* and *curialists* represented competing definitions for the doctrine of the church. From Constantine to the fifteenth century, the conciliarists sought authority for the church from Scripture and the church councils and held influence and power over the curialists. However, following the Great Schism of the fourteenth century, the curialists came to power with Pope Pius II (1405–1464) and viewed authority as emanating from the pope. Thus, when Martin Luther (1483–1546) arrived, even in his early Ninety-Five Theses (1517) he called for reform of doctrine in the understanding of how man relates to God, and the error of indulgences as “nets” with which one fishes for wealth (Thesis 66). Pope Leo X (1475–1521) permitted the sale of indulgences, which gave assurance to the masses that their purchase would aid their loved ones to see a quick release from purgatory. While at first Luther sought a reformation of the church’s understanding of the doctrine of salvation, those in power interpreted Luther as calling for reform of church authority. Such notice came as the result of the translation into the common language of Luther’s persuasive theses. To question doctrine is to question the church, and a call for a reformation of the doctrine of salvation is a call for a reformation of the doctrine of the church.

Case Studies

1. Pilgram Marpeck’s Correct Baptism
2. The Lord’s Supper

For the Church

The Reformers’ pursuit of a simplified doctrine of the church followed their initial decisions to pursue a reform movement that returned to the sources of authoritative Scriptures for the establishment of a biblical understanding of the doctrine of salvation. This resulted in a mere ecclesiology centered on *notae ecclesiae* that affirmed the church as an invisible collection of all believers and a visible gathering that upheld the centrality of the preached Word of God and the gospel and the regular practice of baptism and the Lord’s Supper as the ordinances instituted by Christ. Yet ecclesiological variances of practice and specific understanding of church doctrines abounded by geographic region, political influence from the state, and pressure from surrounding movements. With this variance, what is sometimes lost is the larger picture that the recovery of churches built around the gospel ensured that future generations received the same gospel. Had the Reformers not wrestled with the doctrine of the church, the recovery of the *solus* might not have lasted more than a generation. Therefore, in our own day, church reform needs to continue, not only for the quest of seeking to follow the Scriptures, but also to ensure there remain future visible communions of saints who will treasure and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ until he returns.

Historical Theology for the Church

Jason G. Duesing & Nathan A. Finn, editors
B&H Academic, 2021

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