

## **The Doctrine of the Reformation**

1. I want to review the major thinkers who shaped “the Reformation.”

Nickolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) protested the teaching that the earth was the center of the universe as opposed to the earth rotating around the sun. He believed science and faith existed side-by-side.

Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) protested the church’s failure to believe Copernicus. He developed a telescope and proved Copernicus’s theory. He too did not see anything wrong with science and religion co-existing.

John Wycliffe (1320-1384) protested salvation by means of the sacraments, and wanted the Bible translated so people could see that salvation came by faith alone.

Martin Luther (1482-1546) protested salvation sacraments, last rights, substantiation, and indulgences etc. He was quoted “I have no confidence that my merit would assuage Him.” In 1517 he protested many things by posting ninety-five propositions on a church door in Wittenberg.

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) protested by publishing and debating sixty-seven propositions. Proposition One stated “All who say the gospel is invalid without the confirmation of the church err and slander God.”

William Tyndale (1494-1536) protested “I have perceived by experience, how, that it was [to establish] impossible the lay people in any truth except the Scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue, that they might see the process, order, and meaning of the text.” He began an extensive program of Scripture translations.

John Calvin (1509-1564) was known as the predestined reformer. He believed: in total depravity to a fault, limited atonement, irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints.

Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) was known as the Anti-Calvinist and thus they did debate. The issues that divided the followers of Calvin from the followers of Arminius are deep and complicated, requiring robust theological study to understand fully, but the basics are clear enough, and summarized as follows:

Calvin: In the eternal past, God predestined (determined ahead of time) who will be saved and who will not.

Arminius: No, God elected (chose) those whom he knew would believe of their own free will.

Calvin: Free will and God’s foreknowledge have nothing to do with it. God has chosen some; others he has condemned.

Arminius: Wrong. We have all been given enough grace to decide to believe or not. That's free will. Election is conditional on the one being saved.

Calvin: That's where you're wrong. Depravity extends to every part of a person, including the will. No one can make the decision by themselves. It takes God's call on their lives, a call he decided on before the foundations of the world.

Arminius: Of course we all have inherited a corrupted nature from Adam and the fall, but God has removed that guilt and condemnation so we can accept God's love and grace.

Calvin: Corrupt nature? It's more than that. Adam's sin is passed to us all. We are all born in sin. This is why Christ died for the elect.

Arminius: Not just the elect. Jesus died for all human kind, and that means anyone and everyone is redeemable should they choose to commit to Christ.

Calvin: That would mean the death of our Lord was unsuccessful, because surely not everyone will believe.

Arminius: Never! Jesus' sacrifice is effective for all who choose to believe.

Calvin: So we're back to free will again.

2. The arguments are much deeper than this fabricated dialogue, but it does reveal the crux of the debate: predestination and free will. Calvin taught that those whom God chose will surely believe; Arminius taught that it's up to the individual to choose God.

3. There was also the issue of what has become known as the "security of the believer." Calvin believed that the elect would persevere to the end of their lives. In other words, the elect could not lose their salvation.

3.1 Arminius said that Scripture taught the opposite: a person could surrender their salvation by choosing to reject the salvation they once had. A vast number of denominations are either totally or partially devotees of Arminius's ideas.

4. Clearly, all of these men gave serious thought to the many extra-biblical revelations foisted on the Catholic body of believers. Much in the way the Talmudist did during the Age of the Hypostatic Union and thus justly encountered the wrath of the Lord Jesus.

Note: Much of the information provided in this Doctrine was taken from a wonderful book written by Alton Gansky entitled "60 People Who Shaped The Church." To Mr. Gansky I am grateful for a scholarly presentation and a truly enjoyable experience.