

What Does it Mean to be: *Calvinist* Dutch Reformation, Part 1: Augustinian Calvinism

Bill Petro

your friendly neighborhood historian

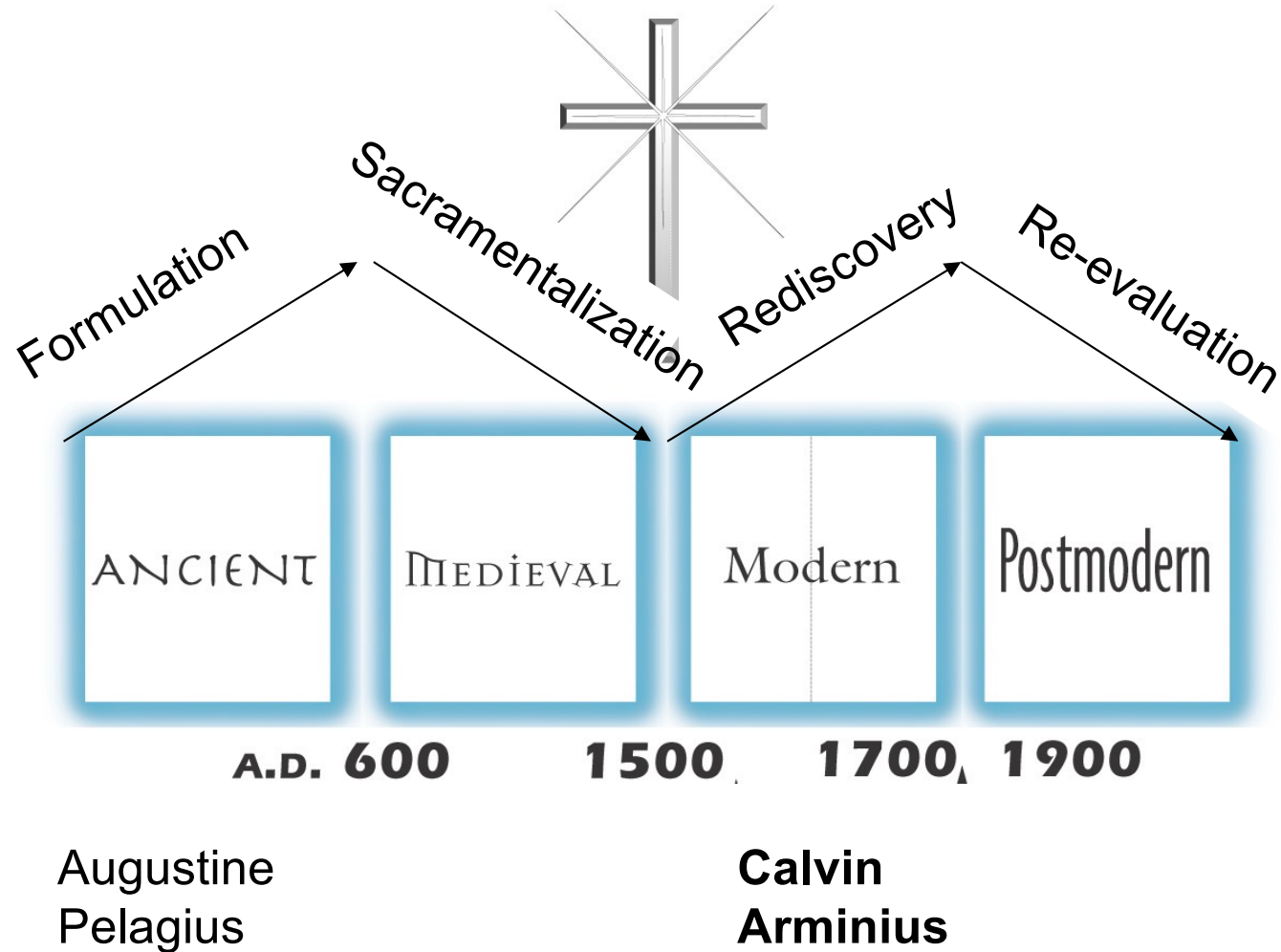
billpetro.com/compass

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, you should be able to:

- Differentiate the teachings of **Arminius** from **Calvin**
- Contrast **Pelagius** and **Augustine**
- Discuss “**Theological Anthropology**”

The Divisions of History



History of The Beatles: Arrival in America February 7, 1964 [Edit](#)

February 7, 2026

Reading Time: 6 minutes



The Beatles arrived at JFK on Feb 7, 1964. Image: JBP Trans Consulting

HISTORY OF THE BEATLES

[Podcast version](#)

On February 7, 1964, The Beatles landed at JFK Airport in New York. The airport had recently been

renamed by a mourning country in honor of [President Kennedy](#), who had been assassinated just 77 days earlier. When they landed, the airport was full of 4,000 greeters.

Not realizing why there was such a crowd, **Paul McCartney** wondered aloud, "*Who is this for?*" as the screaming fans rushed the gates to meet The Beatles. Two days later, on Sunday night, they would appear for their first of three consecutive Sunday night appearances on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

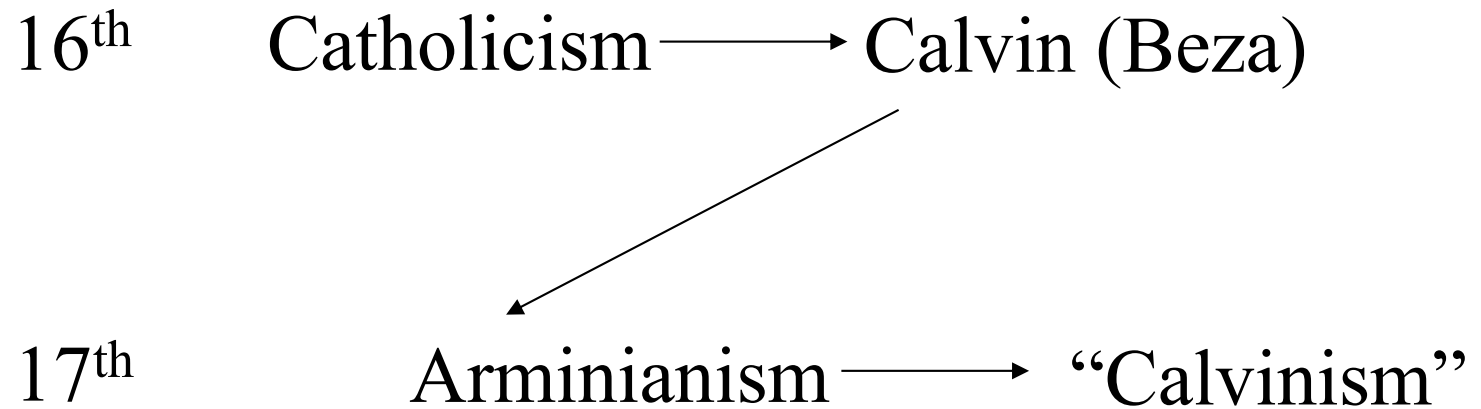
Spread of Calvinism



Pendulum of History



Theology: 16th & 17th centuries



Calvin on the Tightrope of Predestination

- Excessive *curiosity* in what God has not revealed
- Excessive *timidity* in teaching what He has revealed

Calvin on Predestination

Institutes, Chapter 21. *Of the eternal election, by which God has predestinated some to salvation, and others to destruction.*

- “All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation”
- “God by his secret counsel chooses whom he will while he rejects others.”

Three Concepts

- Justice
 - man gets what he deserves... *condemnation*
- Mercy
 - man *doesn't* get what he deserves... *rescue*
- Grace
 - man gets what he *doesn't* deserve... *glory*

Calvin on Predestination, *cont*

“We maintain that this counsel, as regards the *elect*, is founded on His free **mercy**, without any respect to human worth, ...

while those whom He dooms to *destruction* are excluded from access to life by a **just** and blameless—but at the same time incomprehensible—judgment.”

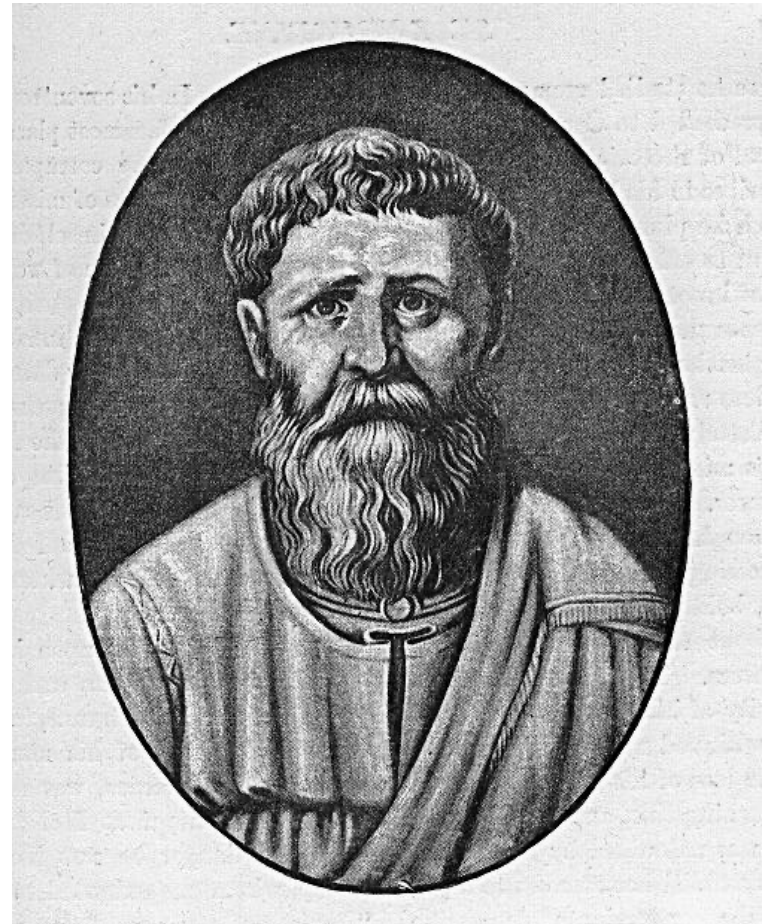
Jacobus Arminius

- a.k.a. James Harmens
- 1560-1609
- Studied under Theodore Beza
- Dutch theologian
- Professor: Leiden University
- Differed with (Calvin)/Beza on:
 - Unconditional election
 - Irresistible grace
 - Perseverance
 - Predestination
- Accused of being *Pelagian*



Augustine

- Hippo in Africa
- Pagan youth
- Rome
- Milan: taught rhetoric
- *Confessions*
“You made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you.”
- Fall of Rome
- Church Father



Pelagius

- British Monk
- Popular teacher in Rome
- Contradicted Augustine:
“The enemy of the grace of God”
- Denied Original Sin



Theological Anthropology

- Does man have any innate ability to affect in any measure his standing before God?
- Is there any goodness in man that would cause God to look upon him with favor?
- Is man totally depraved?
- Can man do anything to save himself?

Pelagianism vs. Augustinianism

Issue

Pelagian

Augustinian

Fall of Man

Sets a bad example, but doesn't affect human nature

Every human's nature is corrupted by original sin, inherit moral guilt

Free will

Absolute freedom of choice

Original sin renders men inclined to choose bad

Sin

Comes about by free choice

Inevitable result of fallen human nature

Forgiveness of Sin

Given to those who sincerely repent and merit it

Part of God's grace, disbursed according to His will.

Pelagianism vs. Augustinianism *cont.*

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Pelagian</u>	<u>Augustinian</u>
Sinlessness	Theoretically possible, although unusual	Impossible due to the corruption of human nature
Salvation	Humans will be judged for their choices	Salvation is bestowed by God's grace
Predestination	Rejected *	God decides who is saved, prevents them from falling away.

Pelagius and Augustine:

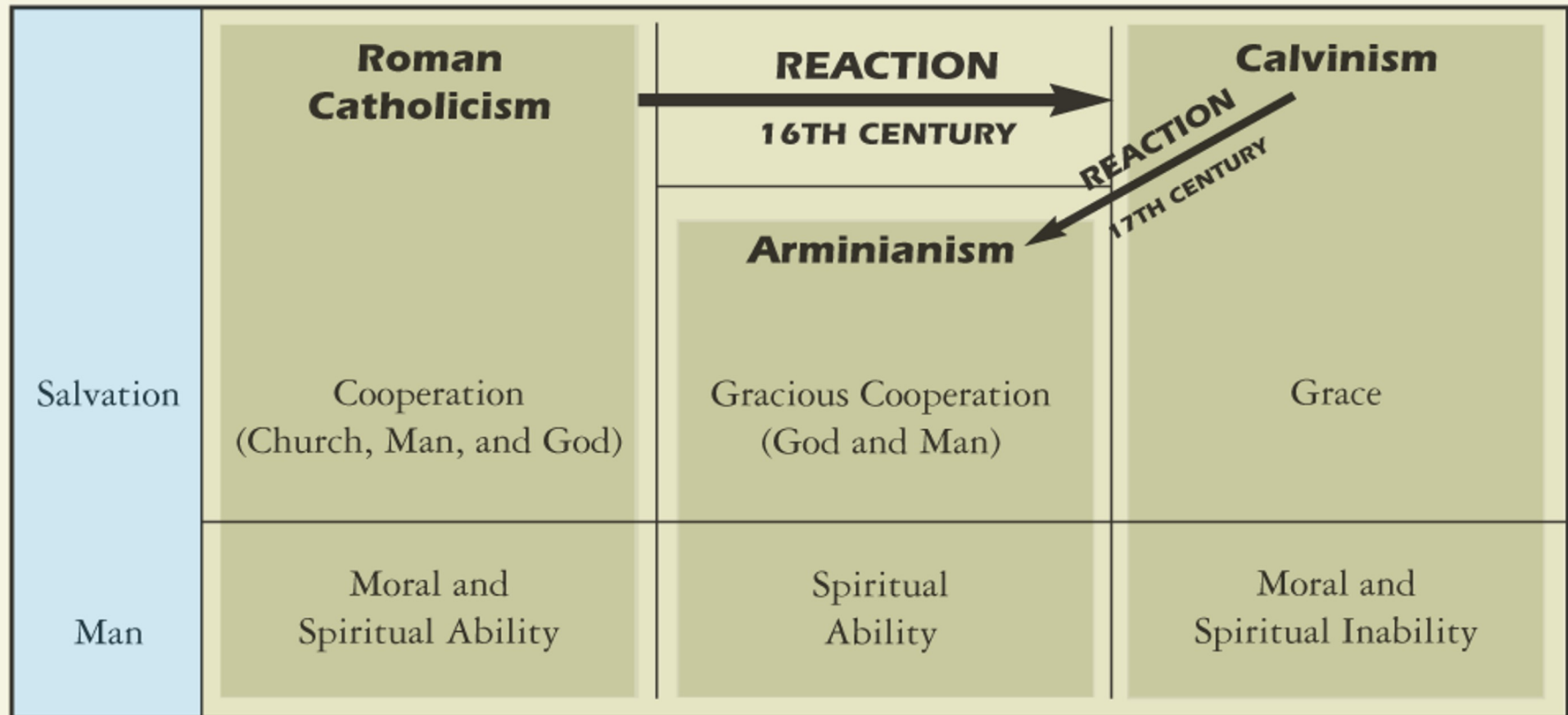
A Study in Contrast

	Pelagius	Augustine
Original Sin	Denied	Affirmed
Natural Will	Plenary Ability	Inability
Grace	Gracious, Not Necessary	Absolute Necessity
Predestination	Based on Knowledge (foresight)	Based on Love (foreknowledge)

Augustine on Freedom of Choice



The Formation of Theology in the Reformation Era



Sin and Grace Controversy

Augustine	Semi-Augustinianism	Semi-Pelagianism	Pelagius
354-430	(Synod of Orange) 529	(John Cassian) 360–435	354-418
Salvation Totally & Causally of God <i>(monergism)</i>	Salvation Originates in God & Proceeds by Man	Salvation Originates in Man & Proceeds by Man & God	Salvation Totally & Causally of Man

1-Word Summary

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| • Catholic Church | Merit |
| • Luther | Justification |
| • Zwingli | Sovereignty |
| • Anabaptists | <i>Credobaptism</i> |
| • Calvin | Omnipotence |
| • Pelagius | Ability. |