



SOTERIOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Luther, Erasmus, Melancthon

CHHI 997



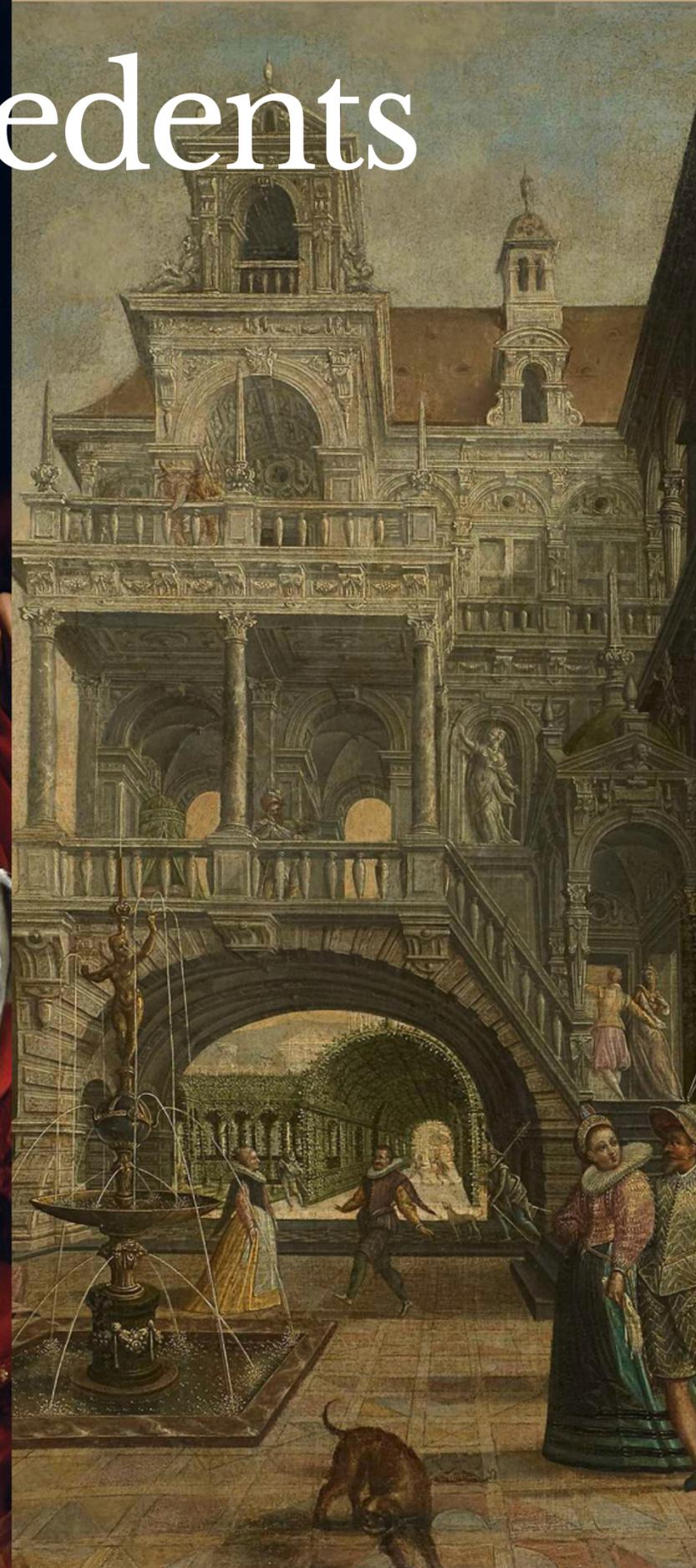
SOTERIOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

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Antecedents

PAPAL CORRUPTION

Leo X
(aka "the Antichrist")



RENISSANCE

A renewed interest in
the humanities and
classical education.

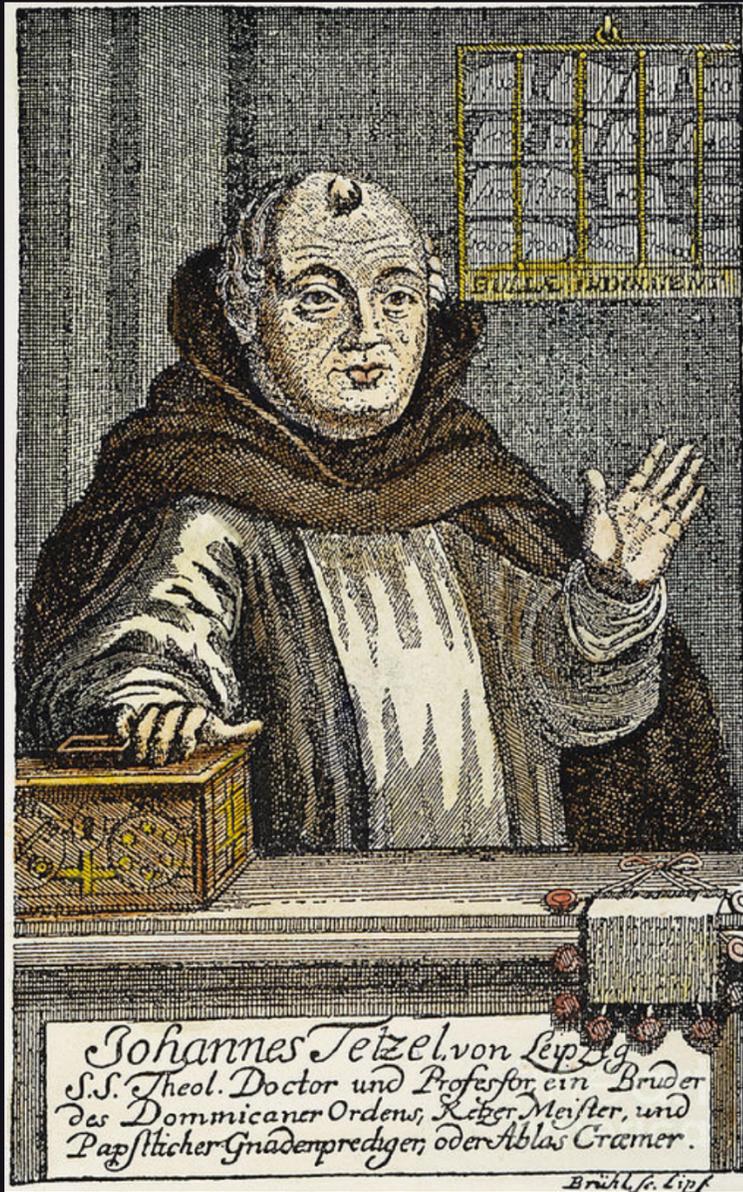
Papal Corruption

An Other Roman Catholic Shenanigans

- **Corrupt church leaders used their authority to acquire wealth.**
- **Clerical celibacy requirements led to scandals**
- **Papal authority leveraged over civil affairs**
- **The sale of indulgences.**
- **Latin teaching kept people from understanding the message in their own language.**
- **Top-heavy hierarchy was resistant to change as just a few bishops and cardinals controlled everything.**



Roman Catholic Soteriology in the 1500s



- **Works:** Necessity of good works/merit for salvation.
- **Sacraments:** Grace received through the sacraments of the Church.
- Salvation is more communal than individualistic, in which the Church acted as a mediator between God and humanity.
- **Purgatory:** Those who died in a state of grace but still had sins or imperfections were purified in purgatory before entering into heaven.
- **Interpretive Authority:** The authority to interpret scripture resided in the hierarchy of the Church (Pope and bishops, not in individuals)
- **Veneration:** Worship of saints and the use of relics and sacred images.
- **Exclusivity:** No salvation outside of the RC Church.
- **No Eternal Security:** Asserted the possibility of falling from grace and losing salvation through mortal sin.
- **Indulgences:** Selling salvation based on the "Treasury of Merit" built up by the works of the saints.

"As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs." -Tetzel (probably)

"Ad Fontes"

The Renaissance brought a renewed interest in the humanities and emphasized an effort to return "to the sources" of Greek and Latin literature, believing that truth was at the source.



St. Augustine of Hippo

The fact that Luther was an Augustinian monk is key.

Affirmations of Augustine:

- **Against Origin, Denies Universalism and Purgatory** (Retractationum libri duo, 1.7.6. and Enchiridion 18.67)
- **Affirms Original Sin** (De meritis peccatorum et de baptismo parvulorum 1.4.4)
- **Affirms Predestination** (Expositio Quarundam Propositionum Ex Epistola Ad Romanos 1.52)
- **Penal Substitutionary Atonement** (De peccatorum meritis et de baptismo parvulorum 2.27)
- **Salvation in Christ Alone** (De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo parvulorum 3.11)
- **Effectual Calling/Irresistible Grace** (De Praedestinatione Sanctorum 1.16.32-33)
- **Affirms Justification** (Sermones 292.4.6)
- **Perseverance of the elect** (De dono perseverantiae, 7.15)



St. Augustine of Hippo

The fact that Luther was an Augustinian monk is key.

Affirmations of Augustine:

- **Baptismal Regeneration** (De peccatorum meritis et de baptismo parvulorum 2.27)
- **Infant Baptism** (De peccatorum meritis et de baptismo parvulorum 2.27)
- **Baptism remits prior sins only** (Retractationes 1.7.5)
- **Post-Baptism sins are remitted through prayer and penance.** (De peccatorum meritis et de baptismo parvulorum 2.8)



AUGUSTINIAN SOTERIOLOGY:

What aspects of Augustinian theology would have conflicted with Roman Catholic soteriology in the 1500s?

Forerunners of the Reformation



DESIDERIUS ERASMUS

Dutch theologian known as the "Prince of the Humanists" who assembled the Textus Receptus, making the Greek NT much more accessible to scholars
(1466-1536)



MARTIN LUTHER

German monk who inadvertently catalyzed the reformation and became its forerunning soteriological theologian. Known for boldness more than specificity.
(1483-1546)



PHILIP MELANCTON

German, Lutheran reformer known for his ability to systematize theology for clarity and education.
(1497-1560)



Aspects of Erasmus' Soteriology

Rolena Park Church | Jan. 2020

HUMANIST HERMENEUTICS

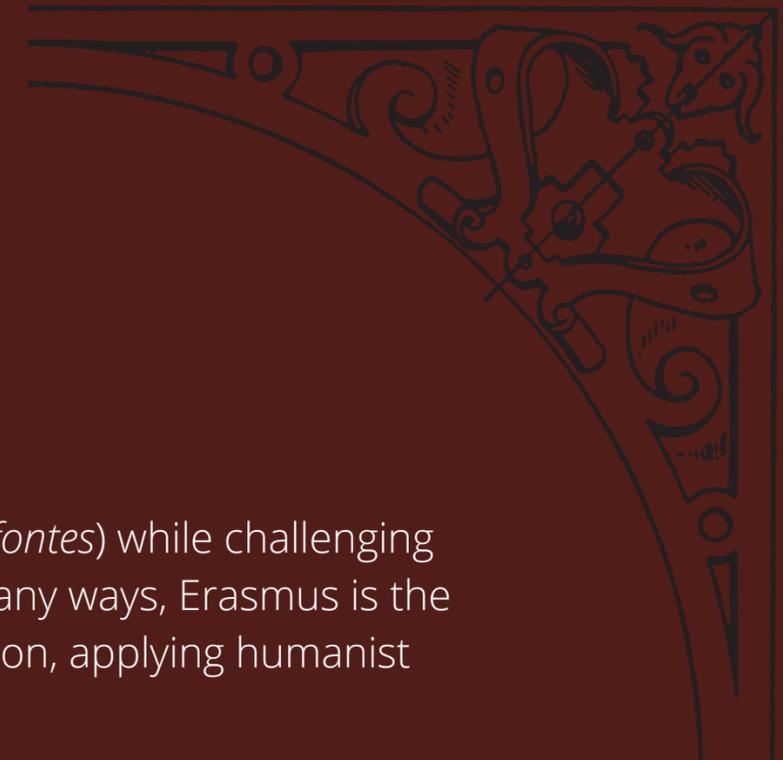
Biblical interpretation, focusing on the source (*ad fontes*) while challenging the Roman Catholic Church and its practices. In many ways, Erasmus is the bridge between the renaissance and the reformation, applying humanist values to Scripture.

PIETY AND FAITH OVER RITUALS AND WORKS

Inner heart change was more important to Erasmus than ritual practices of the church. Repentance and faith are essential to salvation and works occur as a result of a transformed heart of faith.

FREE WILL OVER PREDESTINATION

Rejecting what would eventually be called "Calvinist" conceptions of predestination, Erasmus believed that one could freely choose to accept or reject salvation. Notably, his commentary and translation (TR) reflects an emphasis on human agency.



Desiderius Erasmus on Free Will

The Freedom of the Will



Key Ideas:

- Humans are free to choose good or evil and are not predestined to either.
- Free will is necessary for moral responsibility.
- Since humans are created in the image of God, they have the capacity for reason and volition.
- Free will is necessary if God's love is not coercive.



Desiderius Erasmus on Free Will

The Freedom of the Will

"I admit that many different views about free choice have been handed down from the ancients about which I have, as yet, no fixed conviction, except that I think there to be a certain power of free choice." 37

"By free choice in this place we mean a power of the human will by which a man can apply himself to the things which lead to eternal salvation, or turn away from them." 47

Was Erasmus a Pelagian?



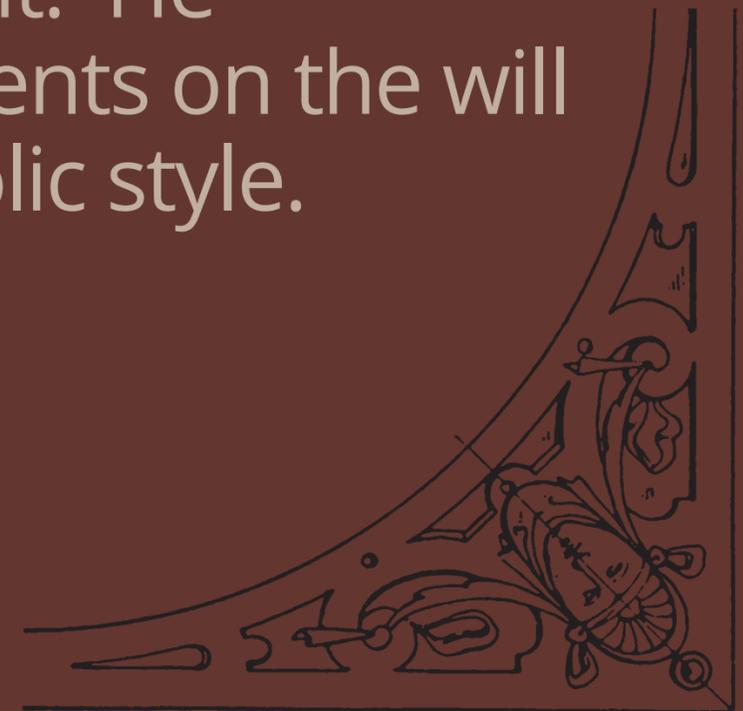
"Pelagius, while he feared for the justice of God, ascribed too much to free choice, and those are not so far distant from him who ascribe such power to the human will that by their own natural strength they can merit, through good works, that supreme grace by which we are justified." 89

"After his battle with Pelagius, Augustine became less just toward free choice than he had before. Luther, on the other hand, who had previously allowed something to free choice, is now carried so far in the heat of his defense as to destroy it entirely." 90



Desiderius Erasmus seeks *a via media* between Pelagianism and "Bondage of the Will"

Sees Luther's "Bondage of the Will" view to be extreme and rejects it. He attributes Luther's statements on the will to Luther's brash, hyperbolic style.





Salvation by faith...mostly.

A father lifts up a child who has fallen and has not yet strength to walk, however much it tries, and show it an apple which lies over against it; the child longs to run, but on account of the weakness of its limbs it would have fallen had not its father held its hand and steadied its footsteps, so that led by its father it obtains the apple which the father willingly puts in its hand as a reward for running. The child could not have stood up if the father had not lifted it, could not have seen the apple had the father not shown it, could not advance unless the father had all the time assisted its feeble steps, could not grasp the apple had the father not put it into his hand. What, then, can the infant claim for itself? And yet it does something. But it has nothing to glory about in its powers, for it owes its very self to its father. (Erasmus, On the Freedom of the Will)



Consequences of Erasmus' Contributions:

- ***Texus Recuptus***: His NT translation helps get the reformation started!
- **Piety**: His emphasis on repentance and faith over ritual sets the stage for the reformation.
- **Hermeneutics**: Humanism applied to Scripture brought about better exegesis.
- **Personal Responsibility**: Individual response over corporate adherence helped drive the reformation forward.
- **Foil for Luther**: His emphasis on free will contributes to Luther's understanding of human depravity.

Can we really distinguish Erasmus' view of free will from Pelagius? If so How?

AD FONTES:

What camp would Erasmus best fit into (Pelagian, Semi-Pelagian, Semi-Augustinian, or Augustinian)?

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AD FONTES:

How important was the *Texus Receptus*
for soteriological development?
Was its value more critical to *sola*
scriptura?

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Martin Luther

On Soteriology

- ***Sola Fide***: Luther believed that salvation is a free gift of God's grace, received by faith alone in Jesus Christ. He believed that good works could not earn salvation, and that any attempt to do so was a form of legalism.
- **Bondage of the Will**: Luther believed that human beings are spiritually dead and unable to choose God on their own. He taught that salvation is entirely the work of God, and that the Holy Spirit must regenerate a person before they can believe.
- **Priesthood of all Believers**: Luther believed that every Christian is a priest and has direct access to God through faith in Jesus Christ. He rejected the idea that a special class of priests was needed to mediate between God and humanity.
- ***Sola Scriptura***: Luther believed that the Bible is the ultimate authority for Christian belief and practice. He rejected the authority of the Catholic Church and taught that individuals could read and interpret the Bible for themselves, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- **Two Sacraments**: Luther recognized two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper. He believed that they were important means of grace, but rejected the Catholic teaching that they were necessary for salvation.



Martin Luther

To Erasmus, "Throughout your treatment you forget that you said that 'free-will' can do nothing without grace, and you prove that 'free-will' can do all things without grace! Your inferences and analogies "For if man has lost his freedom, and is forced to serve sin, and cannot will good, what conclusion can more justly be drawn concerning him, than that he sins and wills evil necessarily?" (p. 149)



Martin Luther

- For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (Romans 1:18)
- As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." (Romans 3:10-12)
- For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph. 2:8-9)
- (Luther focuses on bondage of the will rather than on predestination, though Ephesians 1:4--"even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world"--is in view.)



Martin Luther

Soteriology as it relates to human volition.

To Erasmus, "Even grammarians and schoolboys on street corners know that nothing more is signified by verbs in the imperative mood than what ought to be done, and that what is done or can be done should be expressed by words in the indicative. How is it that you theologians are twice as stupid as schoolboys, in that as soon as you get hold of a single imperative verb you infer an indicative meaning, as though the moment a thing is commanded it is done, or can be done?" (p. 159)

"The passages of Scripture you cite are imperative; and they prove and establish nothing about the ability of man, but only lay down what is and what not to be done." (p. 161)

Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1957).



Martin Luther

"As to why some are touched by the law and others not, so that some receive and others scorn the offer of grace...[this is the] hidden will of God, Who, according to His own counsel, ordains such persons as He wills to receive and partake of the mercy preached and offered." (p. 169)

"Let all the 'free-will' in the world do all it can with all its strength; it will never give rise to a single instance of ability to avoid being hardened if God does not give the Spirit, or of meriting mercy if it is left to its own strength." (p. 202)

"I say that man without the grace of God nonetheless remains the general omnipotence of God who effects, and moves and impels all things in a necessary, infallible course; but the effect of man's being carried along is nothing--that is, avails nothing in God's sight, nor is reckoned to be anything but sin." (p. 265)

Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1957).



Martin Luther

"omnipotence and foreknowledge of God, I repeat, utterly destroy the doctrine of 'free-will'...doubtless it gives the greatest possible offense to common sense or natural reason, that God, Who is proclaimed as being full of mercy and goodness, and so on, should of His own mere will abandon, harden and damn men, as though He delighted in the sins and great eternal torments of such poor wretches. it seems an iniquitous, cruel, intolerable thought to think of God; and it is this that has been such a stumbling block to so many great men down through the ages. And who would not stumble at it? I have stumbled at it myself more than once, down to the deepest pit of despair, so that I wished I had never been made a man. (That was before I knew how health-giving that despair was, and how close to grace.)" (p. 217)

Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1957).



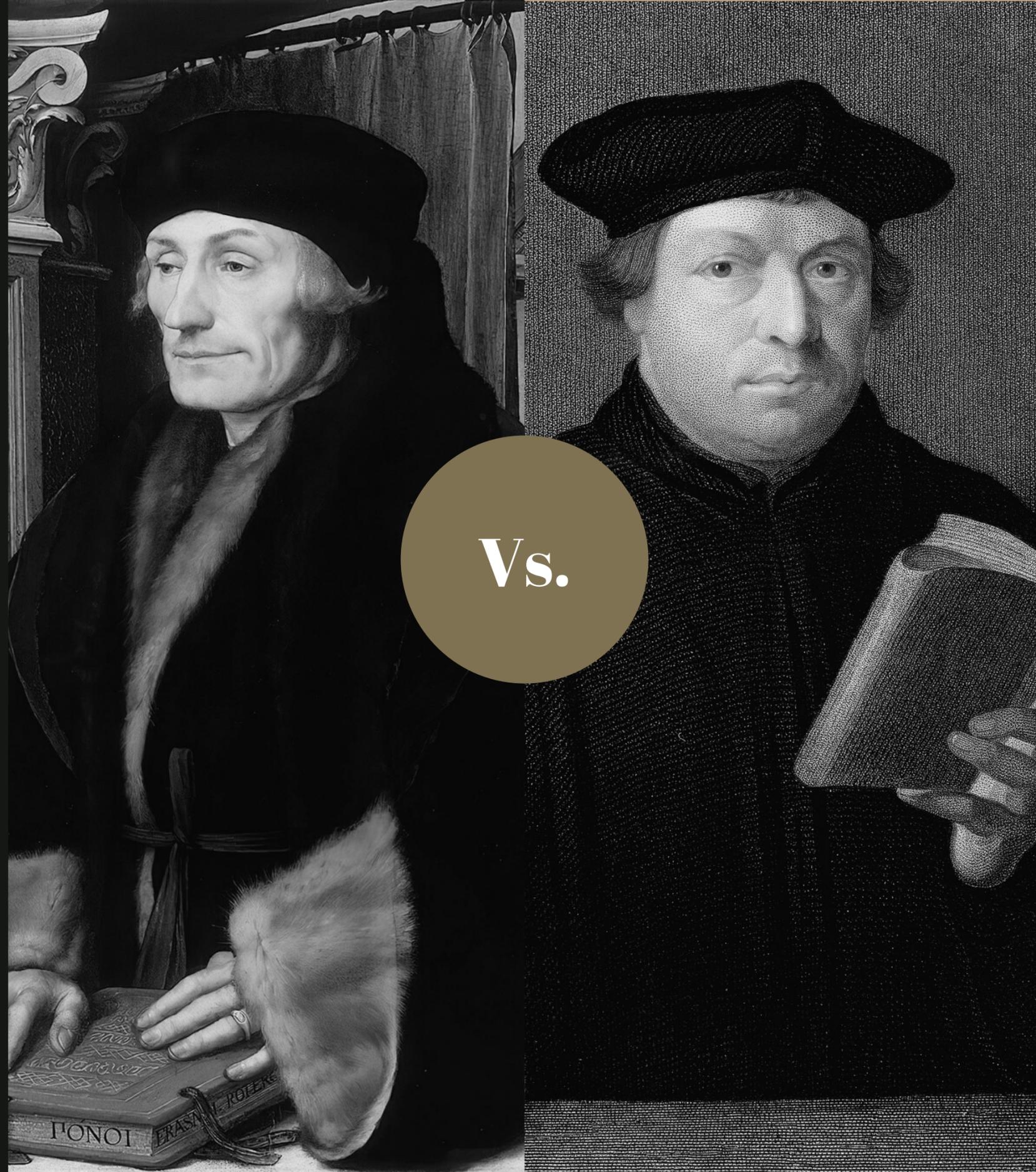
Consequences of Martin Luther's Soteriology:

- The Reformation
- Influenced other reformers (Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, etc.), including views of predestination.
- Luther's brashness and hyperbole in other comments have brought his comments into question.
- Luther brought attention back to the biblical concepts of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to the glory of God alone by the authority of Scripture alone.

ERASMUS

The Freedom of the Will
Faith, not Ritual
Works After Salvation
Remains Roman Catholic

"By free choice in this place we mean a power of the human will by which a man can apply himself to the things which lead to eternal salvation, or turn away from them."
-The Freedom of the Will

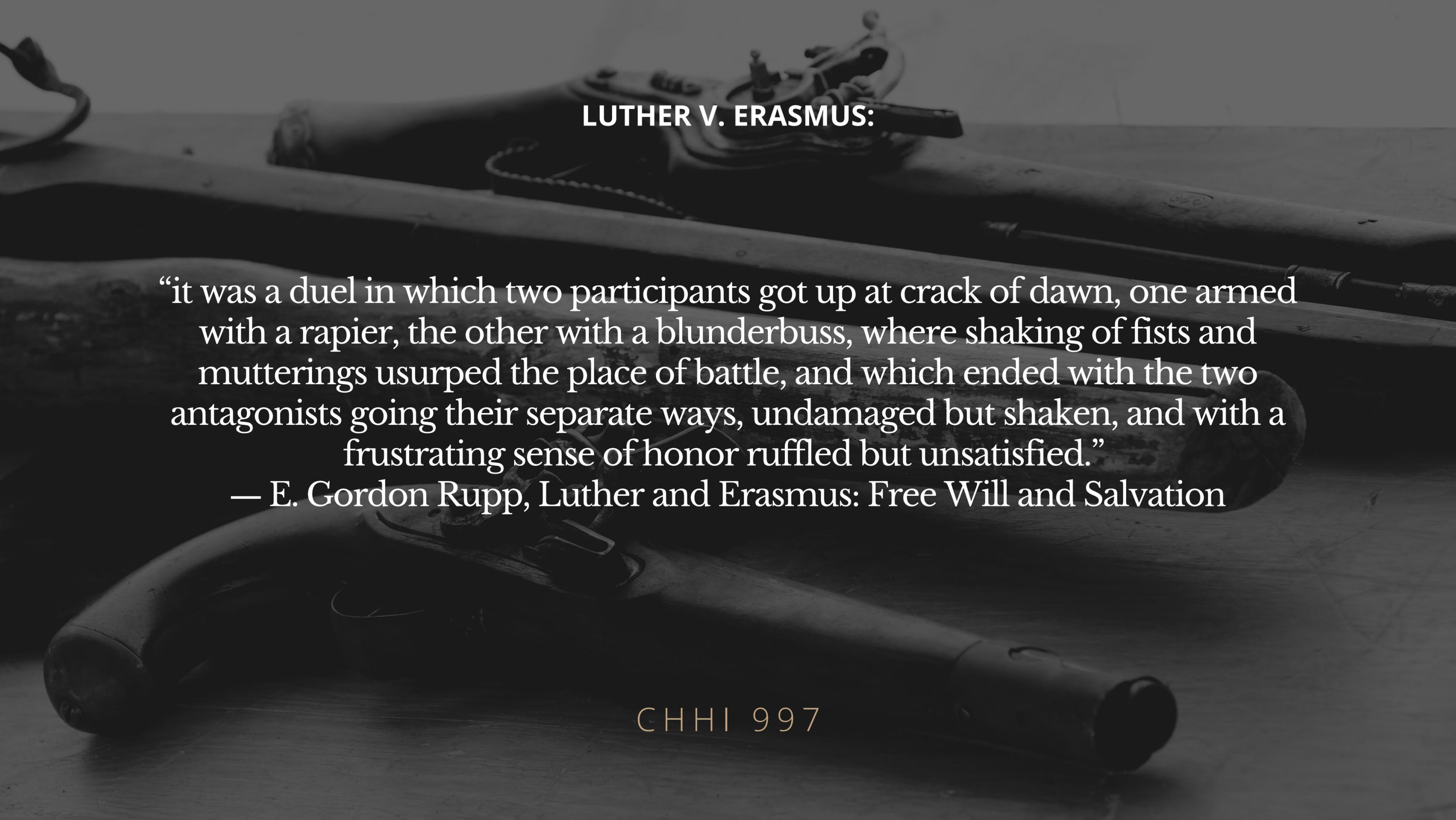


Vs.

LUTHER

The Bondage of Will
Faith, not works
Little on Works
Flees Roman Catholicism

"Let all the 'free-will' in the world do all it can with all its strength; it will never give rise to a single instance of ability to avoid being hardened if God does not give the Spirit, or of meriting mercy if it is left to its own strength."
-The Bondage of the Will



LUTHER V. ERASMUS:

“it was a duel in which two participants got up at crack of dawn, one armed with a rapier, the other with a blunderbuss, where shaking of fists and mutterings usurped the place of battle, and which ended with the two antagonists going their separate ways, undamaged but shaken, and with a frustrating sense of honor ruffled but unsatisfied.”

— E. Gordon Rupp, *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*

Philip Melancthon

"In essentials, unity; in differences, liberty; in all things, charity." -Philip Melancton

"Can't we all just get along?" (Paraphrase)





Melanchthon's Theological Developments:

1. **Justification:** Further developed emphasis on salvation by faith alone apart from works or merit as Christ paid the penalty for human sin.
2. **Grace:** Further developed theology related to salvation being entirely a work of God's grace, noting that God's grace is what enables humans to have faith in Christ. This emphasis on grace was in direct contrast to departure from the medieval Roman Catholic emphasis on merit and works.
3. **Predestination:** Melanchthon emphasized the doctrine of predestination while arguing that it does not take away human responsibility. He asserted that God predestined based on foreknowledge of faith in Christ rather than on any arbitrary or predetermined criteria (Molinism)
4. **Theology of the Cross:** Melanchthon emphasized the importance of the cross in salvation as both the means of atonement Christ used and a symbol of how believers should be willing to suffer for Christ rather than seek worldly power.

Philip Melancthon

Early Double-Predestination

"Since all things that happen, happen necessarily according to divine predestination, our will has no liberty." -*Loci communes* (1521)

He argues from Scripture here for what may be considered a pre-Calvin double-predestination from Matt.10:29 and Prov. 16:14. However, he allows for some form of freedom:

"according to human reason it cannot be denied that there is in it a certain freedom in outward works."



Philip Melancthon

Later diminished focus on predestination:

"Let us not allow our faith to be shaken by unreasonable discussions about predestination; but let us begin with the Word of God, and let us remember that the promises appertain to all, and let us be assured that those things truly belong to us which God has set forth and promised in his Word, because he acts through his Word, and wishes to be found in his Word, according to the passage: "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" [Rom. 1:16] -*Romans (Commentary)*



Philip Melancthon

Bondage of the Will

Melancthon affirmed Luther's concept of Bondage of the Will. He writes "Loci Communes" (1521), "the will of man is like a beast standing between two riders. If God rides, it wills and goes where God wills... If Satan rides, it wills and goes where Satan wills. Nor may it choose to which rider it will run, but the riders themselves fight to determine who shall have and hold it."



Does Melanchthon's view that predestination is based upon God's foreknowledge create a conundrum that he fails to answer? If human will is in bondage to sin, wouldn't God simply foreknow that no one will choose repentance and faith?

Does this conundrum necessitate theological developments through Calvin and the other reformers?



MELANCHTHON AND PREDESTINATION

How important is Melancthon's theological precision and concern for unity to future theological developments in reformed theology?

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Philip Melancton

Augsburg Confession

1 Also they teach that since the fall of Adam all men begotten in the natural way are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with 2 concupiscence; and that this disease, or vice of origin, is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through Baptism and the Holy Ghost.

3 They condemn the Pelagians and others who deny that original depravity is sin, and who, to obscure the glory of Christ's merit and benefits, argue that man can be justified before God by his own strength and reason.

-Article II (Of Original Sin)



Philip Melancton

Augsburg Confession

1 Also they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for 2 Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. 3 This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4.

-Article IV (Of Justification)



Philip Melancthon

Augsburg Confession

1 Of Free Will they teach that man's will has some liberty to choose civil righteousness, and to work 2 things subject to reason. But it has no power, without the Holy Ghost, to work the righteousness of God, that is, spiritual righteousness; since the natural man 3 receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2:14; but this righteousness is wrought in the heart when the Holy Ghost is received 4 through the Word.

-Article XVIII (Of Free Will)



MELANCHTHON AND PREDESTINATION

How does predestination based on foreknowledge work? If we are born with a will in bondage to sin, does it matter that "God looks forward in time" if we are still bound by sin to reject God?

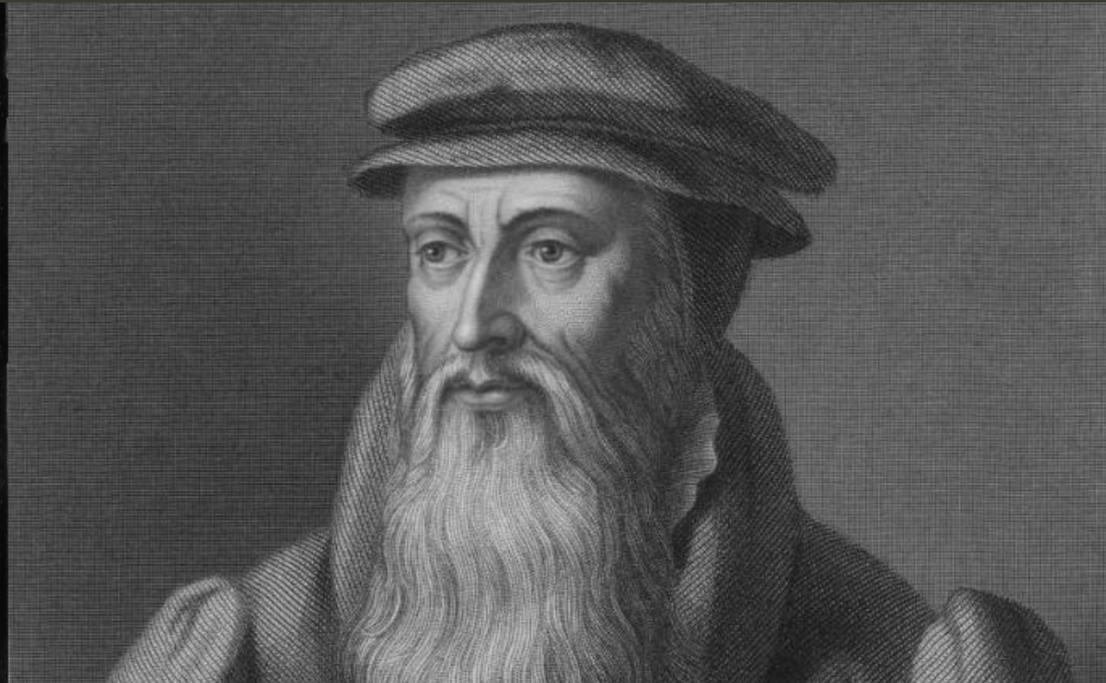
Is this issue left to Calvin, Knox, et al?

Consequences: Reformation



JOHN CALVIN

Expanding the Reformation in France
and beyond



JOHN KNOX

Expanding the reformation in Scotland
and the English speaking world



ULRICH ZWINGLI

Helped expand the Reformation in
Switzerland...led to Anabaptists.

65% of Evangelicals deny the idea that we are born guilty in the sight of God
(compared to 71% of the general population)

STATEMENT NO. 15

Everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God.

U.S. Evangelical Finding:
65% agree vs. 32% disagree

U.S. EVANGELICAL RESPONDENTS

2022

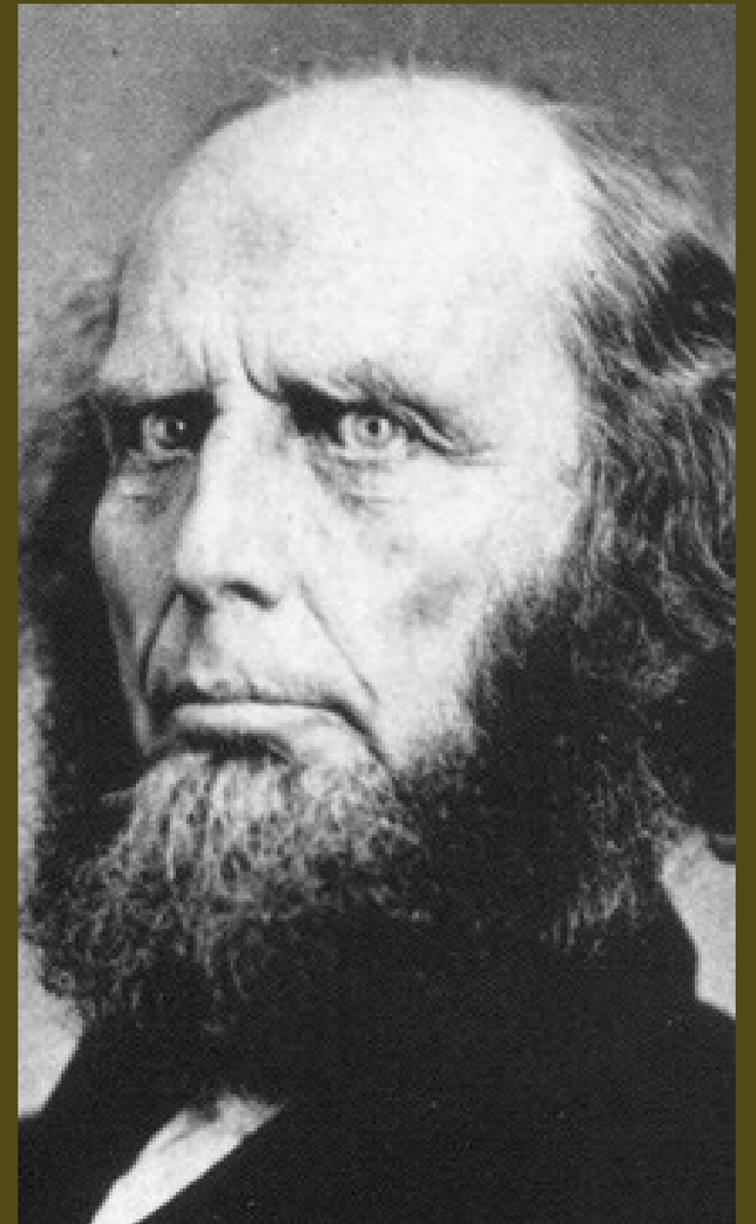


Charles Finney

Denies Lutheran "Faith Alone" Justification

"But for sinners to be forensically pronounced just, is impossible and absurd... As we shall see, there are many conditions, while there is but one ground, of the justification of sinners ... As has already been said, there can be no justification in a legal or forensic sense, but upon the ground of universal, perfect, and uninterrupted obedience to law. This is of course denied by those who hold that gospel justification, or the justification of penitent sinners, is of the nature of a forensic or judicial justification. They hold to the legal maxim that what a man does by another he does by himself, and therefore the law regards Christ's obedience as ours, on the ground that he obeyed for us."

"[Substitutionary Atonement] assumes that the atonement was a literal payment of a debt, which we have seen does not consist with the nature of the atonement ... It is true, that the atonement, of itself, does not secure the salvation of any one"



Views on Free Will

Hard Determinism:

A hard determinist believes that all that happens is causally determined. As a result, there is no human free will of any sort. That is, some hard determinists agree with libertarians that the only notion of genuine freedom is libertarian free will, but they add that since everything is causally determined, no one has such freedom. Other hard determinists might understand free will as soft determinists (described below) do, but still hold that causal conditions are sufficiently strong that no one can actually exercise such freedom.

- John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL, Crossway, 2001), 314.

Libertarianism:

Libertarian free will is a god-like property—the ability to step outside of the causal order and perform actions that are uninfluenced by it. We need something better, something more fitting to our humanity. We live in the causal order of preferences that can empower us as they explain our choices as rational and free agents.

- Joe Campbell and Keith Lehrer, "Keith Lehrer on Compatibilism," *The Journal of Ethics* 22, no. 2 (06, 2018), 232-33.

Compatibilism:

To act without constraint means to act in accord with one's desires. If one adopts this notion of free will, then God can have power to causally determine the free (compatibilistically) actions of others. Hence, divine omnipotence is not compromised if one holds compatibilism.

- John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL, Crossway, 2001), 290.