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# CHURCH HISTORY MONTHLY

January 2023, Vol. 3, no. 1, Page 1/2

Timeline of Topics.

- Quote
- Bernard of Chartes (d. c. 1124)
- Early Church History
- Earliest references to Jesus outside the Bible
- Right After the Protestant Reformation
- Why Calvin would disagree with TULIP

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Jan 9 to Feb 12 (5 weeks)

Course schedule:

- =Week 1: Early Church
- =Week 2: Medieval Christianity
- =Week 3: The Protestant Reformation
- =Week 4: American Church History
- =Week 5: Global South Christianity

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## The only known non-Christian references to Jesus from within 100 years after Jesus

1. Tacitus (55-120) was a Roman Senator and historian who wrote several important works, including "The Annals". In that work he states "Christus, the founder of the name [Christian], was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius." (15.44)
2. Suetonius (d. c. 122), a Roman historian and secretary to the emperor Hadrian (ruled from 117-138). In his book, "The Lives of the Twelve Caesars," he wrote concerning the emperor Claudius, "As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome."(25.4) This reference may match Acts 18:2: "There [Paul] met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome."
- 3a. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (37-100). [Note, many scholars believe this part was added by a Christian scribe later.] In "The Antiquities," Josephus wrote: "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold those and then thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians so named for him are not extinct at this day." (18.3.3)
- 3b. The second reference to Jesus by Josephus is short and is also from "The Antiquities" [and most scholars believe it is authentic]: "[Festus] assembled a council of judges, and brought before it the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ, whose name was James, together with some others, and having accused them as law-breakers, he delivered them over to be stoned." (20.9.1)

**A great description of why we study Church History: “We are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, so that we can see more than they, and things at a greater distance, not by virtue of any sharpness of sight on our part, or any physical distinction, but because we are carried high and raised up by their giant size.” Bernard of Chartres (d. c. 1124)**

Remonstrance beliefs vs. Synod of Dort:  
(I rearrange both of the official lists so they would mirror each other.)

5 Articles of the Remonstrance:

1. Total Depravity: Humans need the grace of God to be saved; they cannot be saved due to their own will.
2. Conditional Election: Election is conditioned on the faith of the individual, i.e., God knows beforehand who will have faith and elects them.
3. Unlimited Atonement: Christ died for all.
4. Individual choice: Each person can choose to resist the grace of God.
5. Falling from the faith is possible: A Christian can reject the faith and become a non-Christian

Synod of Dort’s description of Calvin’s ideas to counter the 5 ideas of the Remonstrance, known as TULIP:

T-Total Depravity of Humanity. People can do no good apart from God’s prompting.

U-Unconditional Election. God chose who would be Christians in the past. This choice is not determined by anything a person would do (that is conditional) but only on God’s pleasure (unconditional).

L-Limited Atonement. Jesus died only for the sins of Christians, also called the elect.

I-Irresistible Grace. If God chooses you, it is irresistible and you will become a Christian.

P-Perseverance of the Saints. God ensures that those he chose will remain Christians. This is also referred to as “once saved, always saved.”

The question of “when God decided” also divides Calvinists. “Supralapsarians” believe God chose before the Fall of Adam, “sublapsarians” believe God chose after the Fall. (“supra” = before; “sub” = after; “lapse” = fall)

**Questions, comments, or want to join a free class contact Mark at [marknickens@gmail.com](mailto:marknickens@gmail.com)**

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## How did we get TULIP and why would Calvin disagree with it?

--John Calvin (1509-1564) lived during the time of the Protestant Reformation and, about a generation after Martin Luther. That meant the Reformation was already established and running. By Calvin’s time, tens of thousands of people had broken with the Catholic Church and formed groups such as Lutherans, Anglicans, and Anabaptists. This freed Calvin from having to convince people to break from the Catholic Church (like Luther did) to focusing on ideas of how God related to Christians.

--The two ideas that Calvin is famous (or infamous) for are predestination and TULIP. But, and this is the fascinating part, Calvin would most likely be quite upset (I believe) if he knew that his entire theological system was reduced to those two ideas.

--First, Calvin’s foundational theological concept was the sovereignty of God, that God is absolutely in control and directs it. It is from this central idea that led Calvin to the ideas of predestination and the different doctrines found in TULIP.

But Calvin’s theology was much greater than these two. For example, in the last edition of “The Institutes,” he only gave four chapters out of eighty to a discussion of predestination. Later, by the early 1600s, which we will see below, predestination was promoted as the chief of Calvin’s ideas. But that was never Calvin’s intention.

--A church leader in the Netherlands named Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) disagreed with predestination, believing instead that each person decides whether or not to have faith in Jesus; this idea is also known as “free will” or Arminianism. He developed his ideas about 30 years after Calvin’s death. His followers were known as Remonstrants (to remonstrate is to vigorously oppose an idea; i.e., they vigorously opposed Calvin’s ideas). They developed his ideas into five points called the Five Articles of Remonstrance. (See the list on the left.)

--Eventually a church council was called in the Netherlands to help settle the dispute between Calvinists and the Remonstrants; it was known as the Synod of Dort (1618-1619). Among other decisions, the Synod countered the Five Articles of Remonstrance with five points of Calvin’s thoughts. That is why there are five points of Calvinism (as it is popularly known). Later someone reduced the five points to five phrases, and tulip, or TULIP, was born. (See the list on the left.). But, and this is the key, TULIP was not developed after a group of scholars studied all of Calvin’s theology and reduced it to 5 points, but, instead, TULIP was merely the opposite of the 5 ideas of the Remonstrance.

--Calvin had no part to play in developing TULIP. I believed he would have disagreed with it because it left out his most important idea, that of the sovereignty of God. All his doctrines, include predestination, are based on his idea of the sovereignty of God. If one starts with Calvin’s idea of the sovereignty of God, then the ideas of TULIP make sense. But, apart from an understanding of the sovereignty of God, TULIP does not make sense, which is why many people struggle with it. Unless it is changed to TULIPS to include the sovereignty of God. :)