

The Canon of Dort

“The Five Points of Calvinism”

Calvinism is a Protestant system of doctrine named after John Calvin. It is the system of understanding Christian salvation (“soteriology”) developed by Calvin and codified during the 1617 Synod of Dort. Calvinism is more broadly known as “Reformed Protestantism”, and encompasses the whole body of doctrine taught by Reformed churches*. TULIP is the shorthand synopsis of Calvinistic soteriology.

T	Total Depravity	Fallen man is totally unable to save himself.
U	Unconditional Election	God’s election is not conditioned by anything in man (this is further expanded by Calvinistic doctrine to say that God also predestines some to damnation, it is called the Doctrine of Double Predestination).
L	Limited Atonement	Christ’s atoning death was sufficient to save all men, but efficient only for the elect.
I	Irresistible Grace	God’s gift of faith cannot be resisted by the elect.
P	Perseverance in Grace	The elect will persevere in the faith.

The Five Points of Remonstrance **

Arminian Soteriology (1610)

Arminianism is a Protestant school of thought named after the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius. Found mostly in Methodist denominations, it originally arose within the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. Arminianism developed after the Dutch Protestants charged the Calvinist party, especially the followers of Theodore Beza and Franciscus Gomarus, of developing a system of doctrine that made God the author of evil as well as good. SCURF is the shorthand synopsis for Arminian soteriology, and it prompted the Synod of Dort (TULIP).

S	Synergism	Fallen man works with God to save himself (it is important to note that <i>Synergism</i> says that God starts the work and man completes it while <i>Semi-Pelagianism</i> says man starts and God finishes and <i>Pelagianism</i> says the man does all the work).
C	Conditional Election	Related to Synergism, God’s election is conditioned on man’s response.
U	Universal Atonement	Christ’s atoning death was sufficient and is efficient to save all men.
R	Resistible Grace	God’s grace can be resisted.
F	Fall from Grace	Though with the help of the Holy Spirit, the elect can stay in the faith, they can possibly fall from God’s grace.

An Orthodox Lutheran View ***

T	Total Depravity	Man cannot effect the will of God to save him or work for himself salvation (John 15:5, Ephesians 2:8-9).
U	Unconditional Election†	If man is totally depraved, then salvation from God is not conditioned by anything in mankind; God does not predestine some to damnation (Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 Timothy 2:3-4).
U	Universal Atonement	Christ’s atoning death was sufficient and is efficient to save all men (1 Timothy 2:3-4).
R	Resistible Grace	God’s grace can be resisted; this is sometimes called “Free Will”—though Luther would write about the <i>Bondage of the Will</i> to sin (Acts 7:51).
F	Fall from Grace	Only by the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit can a believer persevere in faith (John 10:28), but it is possible for a believer to fall from grace; this is related to the idea of “Free Will” (John 15:6).

* “Reformed churches” refers to Protestant denominations historically related by similar Zwinglian or Calvinistic doctrine but organizationally independent

** Remonstrance means “an earnest presentation of reasons for opposition or grievance, especially a document formally stating such points.”

*** These five points are nowhere collected in Lutheran Doctrine as a response to either Calvinism or Arminianism.

† While the title may be the same, the Lutheran understanding of this point differs with the Calvinistic understanding.