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Christian History Made Easy Participant Guide

15. Session 9: Post-Reformation Growing Pains (AD 1600–1700)

The 1600s were a century of fracture. Protestants and Catholics fought bloody wars, Protestants split among themselves over predestination, and English believers argued over how to reform (or leave) the Church of England. Meanwhile the New World opened both new mission fields and new horrors of slavery, which a few brave Christians resisted.

Key takeaways

- Protestant–Catholic conflict turned violent: the Defenestration of Prague (1618) helped spark the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), ended by the Peace of Westphalia; earlier the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre (1572) killed thousands of French Protestants.
- Arminianism vs. Calvinism was the great Protestant dispute. Arminius taught conditional predestination and resistible grace; the Synod of Dort (1618) rejected this and affirmed Calvinist/Reformed views in the Canons of Dort.
- The popular 'TULIP' acrostic is a 20th-century invention, not from Calvin or Dort, and doesn't accurately summarize the actual seventeenth-century debate.

- In England, Puritans sought to purify the Church of England (Millenary Petition, 1603), while Separatists left to form independent congregations. John Smyth led the first English Baptists; John Bunyan wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678).
- The Hampton Court Conference (1604) led King James I to commission the King James Bible (1611), which became the Church of England's standard.
- Against the exploitation of the encomienda system and slavery, Bartolome de las Casas defended Native Americans as fully human, Pedro Claver served African slaves, and William Wilberforce fought the British slave trade.
- The chapter's application theme: Christians can hold different views on predestination and still work together in peace, because unity is grounded in Christ's finished work, not in winning arguments.

Passages worth keeping

"The church ought not to be governed by ... any human invention, but by the laws and rules which Christ hath appointed in his Testament."

The Puritan aim: restore New Testament patterns of worship and order.

"I have declared and demonstrated openly ... that all people of these our Indies are human."

Las Casas' stand that natives bear God's image and cannot be enslaved.

How it connects

The era's tragedy is that people who all claimed Christ divided into warring camps because they could not imagine church apart from state power. Jesus' prayer for unity (John 17) and his conflict pattern (Matthew 18) stand as the corrective the chapter points to.

Scripture referenced

- **John 6:44** -- Cited on predestination and grace in the Arminian/Calvinist debate.
- **Romans 9:10-16** -- Key text on God's electing purpose.
- **1 John 2:2** -- Cited on the scope of the atonement.
- **Ephesians 2:1-3** -- On human nature dead in sin.
- **John 17:20-23** -- Jesus' prayer for the unity of his people.
- **Matthew 18:15-20** -- Jesus' pattern for resolving conflict and keeping peace.