

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Salvation, Session 5, Election—Historical Reconnaissance Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Peterson, Salvation, Session 5, Election— Historical Reconnaissance, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This source presents **Dr. Robert Peterson's lecture on the doctrine of election**, the fifth session in a series on salvation. The lecture provides a **historical overview**, beginning with **John Calvin's views on predestination** and his relationship to earlier reformers. It then examines the development of **Arminianism** in response to Calvinism, outlining the **five points of Arminianism** and the subsequent **Synod of Dort**, which formulated the **five points of Calvinism** as a rebuttal. Finally, the lecture explores **Charles Haddon Spurgeon's engagement with hyper-Calvinism**, emphasizing his defense of traditional Calvinistic beliefs against this extreme form.

**2. 26 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Peterson, Salvation, Session 5 – Double click icon to play in
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Site and click the audio podcast link there (Theology →
Theology, Peterson → Salvation).**



**Peterson_Salvation_
Session05.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Salvation, Session 5, Election—Historical Reconnaissance

Briefing Document: Historical Reconnaissance of the Doctrine of Election

Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented in Dr. Robert A. Peterson's fifth session on Salvation, focusing on the historical reconnaissance of the doctrine of election. The lecture traces the development of this doctrine through key figures like John Calvin and the subsequent debates leading to the Canons of Dort and the emergence of hyper-Calvinism, contrasting these with the views of Jacob Arminius and the Arminians.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. John Calvin and the Development of a Strong Doctrine of Election:

- Peterson highlights Calvin's significant contribution to the doctrine of election, emphasizing his commitment to biblical exegesis in forming a Christocentric theology.
- Calvin built upon Augustine's foundation but distinguished himself through his extensive writings, particularly the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which underwent several expansions.
- Calvin's view on predestination is explicitly stated: "in conformity, therefore, to the clear doctrine of Scripture, we assert that by an eternal and immutable counsel, God has once for all determined both whom he would admit to salvation and whom he would condemn to destruction." (Quoting *Institutes*, Book 3, Chapter 21, Section 7).
- Calvin defended his views against objections concerning free will in his writings.
- Peterson notes Calvin's strong reliance on Augustine's theology, quoting Calvin: "if I wanted to weave a whole volume from Augustine, I could readily show my readers that I need no other language than his." (*Institutes*, 3, 22, 8).

2. The Rise of Protestant Scholasticism and Theodore Beza:

- Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor, is presented as a leader in Protestant scholasticism, which emphasized philosophical theology more than the magisterial reformers.

- Beza's theological system is characterized as "more complete and stronger than Calvin's."

3. Jacob Arminius and the Challenge to Calvinistic Election:

- Jacob Arminius was initially taught Beza's strong Calvinism but later developed a different understanding of salvation.
- Arminius emphasized God's foreknowledge as the basis for election: "God planned to save all those whom he foresaw...would believe in Christ." This makes election "contingent upon, dependent upon, and conditioned by God's foreseeing, foreknowing people's faith."
- While agreeing with Augustine and Calvin on total depravity (inability of sinners to save themselves), Arminius introduced the concept of universal prevenient grace, which "enables all to exercise saving faith in Christ, if only they will." This contrasted with the Calvinistic view of particular and efficacious prevenient grace.
- Arminius diverged from Calvin and Beza by asserting that God's foreknowledge is not causal: "A thing does not come to pass because it is foreknown, but it is foreknown because it is yet to be." (*Arminius' Private Disputations* 28.14).
- Peterson highlights a perceived lack of frankness in some of Arminius's statements, citing Carl Bangs' biography.

4. The Five Points of Arminianism (The Remonstrants):

- The Arminian views were formalized in five points by his followers in a document called the Remonstrants:
- **Conditional Election:** God's choice for salvation is based on foreseen faith.
- **Universal Atonement:** Jesus died to make salvation possible for everyone.
- **Total Depravity/Prevenient Grace:** Human inability is mitigated by universal prevenient grace enabling choice.
- **Resistible Grace:** God's grace can be rejected.
- **Conditional Perseverance:** Uncertainty about whether believers could ultimately fall away.

5. The Synod of Dort and the Five Points of Calvinism:

- The Arminian Remonstrance led the Dutch Calvinist majority to convene the Synod of Dort (1618) to evaluate and judge Arminian views.
- The Synod produced the Canons of Dort, a point-by-point response to the Remonstrants, which articulated what later became known as the five points of Calvinism (often remembered by the acronym TULIP):
- **Total Depravity:** Sinners are unable to save themselves.
- **Unconditional Election:** God's election is based on His own purpose and grace, not on foreseen human action. "God saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus...before eternal ages." (Referring to 2 Timothy 1:9).
- **Limited Atonement (Definite/Particular Atonement):** Christ died to actually save the elect, not merely to make salvation possible for everyone. "by your death, O Lamb of God, you purchased...from every tribe and language of people and nation." (Referring to Revelation 5).
- **Irresistible Grace:** God's saving grace will unfailingly bring the elect to faith.
- **Perseverance of the Saints:** God preserves true believers to the end. "They can fall away...but not totally and finally." (Referring to Augustine).
- Peterson emphasizes that the five points of Calvinism are a response to Arminianism and do not represent the entirety of Reformed theology.

6. Charles Haddon Spurgeon and Hyper-Calvinism:

- Peterson introduces Charles Haddon Spurgeon and his confrontation with hyper-Calvinism, an extreme form of Calvinism.
- Key tenets of hyper-Calvinism as presented by Spurgeon's context:
- God only loves the elect.
- There is no universal gospel call, only an efficacious call to the elect. Hyperists believed you should only preach the gospel to the elect.
- Unbelief is not a sin for the non-elect because they cannot believe.
- Views that do not accept their form of Calvinism are not Christian.

- Spurgeon opposed hyper-Calvinism, advocating for a universal gospel call based on the biblical mandate, even though God's saving work is ultimately for the elect. He famously said, "We don't know who the elect are. We cannot go around to men and pull the shirt out of the back of their pants and find an E on it for the elect. We preach the gospel indiscriminately, and God draws his people to himself."
- Spurgeon believed in God's special love for the elect but also a general love for all humanity. He affirmed that those who reject Christ bring condemnation upon themselves.
- Peterson notes that Spurgeon's views were a restatement of historical Calvinism (Augustine and Calvin) and that traditional Calvinism eventually gained more acceptance than hyperism among Particular Baptists in England, although both were later overshadowed by theological liberalism.

Quotes:

- **Calvin on Predestination:** "in conformity, therefore, to the clear doctrine of Scripture, we assert that by an eternal and immutable counsel, God has once for all determined both whom he would admit to salvation and whom he would condemn to destruction." (*Institutes*, Book 3, Chapter 21, Section 7)
- **Calvin on Augustine:** "if I wanted to weave a whole volume from Augustine, I could readily show my readers that I need no other language than his." (*Institutes*, 3, 22, 8)
- **Arminius on Foreknowledge:** "A thing does not come to pass because it is foreknown, but it is foreknown because it is yet to be." (*Arminius' Private Disputations* 28.14)
- **Spurgeon on the Gospel Call:** "[Hyperists] are too orthodox to obey the will. They desire to understand first who is appointed to come to the supper, and then they will invite them. Ha ha, the master sent them out to the highways and byways, inviting everybody to come in."

Key Takeaways:

- The doctrine of election has a rich and complex history with significant developments from Augustine to Calvin.
- Arminius presented a major challenge to the Calvinistic understanding of election, leading to the formulation of the five points of Arminianism.

- The Synod of Dort was a crucial event that solidified the Dutch Reformed Church's commitment to a Calvinistic understanding of salvation, articulated in the five points of Calvinism.
- Hyper-Calvinism represents an extreme interpretation of Calvinistic principles that was opposed by figures like Charles Haddon Spurgeon.
- The five points of Calvinism are a specific response to Arminianism and should not be considered a comprehensive summary of Reformed theology.

Further Considerations:

- The nuances within both Arminian and Calvinistic thought are significant.
- The historical context of these debates is crucial for understanding the various positions.
- The relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility remains a key point of discussion.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Salvation, Session 5, Election— Historical Reconnaissance

Study Guide: Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Salvation, Session 5, Election, Historical Reconnaissance

Quiz

1. Explain John Calvin's relationship to the theologies of Martin Luther and Philipp Melancthon regarding the doctrines of grace and predestination.
2. What were the two primary scholarly activities to which John Calvin devoted himself, and what was the significance of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*?
3. Describe Theodore Beza's role in the development of Reformed theology after Calvin and how his approach differed from Calvin's.
4. What was the central point of disagreement between Jacob Arminius and the strong Calvinists in the Dutch Reformed Church, particularly Franciscus Gomarus?
5. Briefly outline the five points of Arminianism as presented in the Remonstrants.
6. What was the historical context and purpose of the Synod of Dort?
7. List the five points of Calvinism (TULIP) that emerged from the Synod of Dort and explain how they were intended as a response to Arminianism.
8. According to the lecture, what are some common misunderstandings or criticisms associated with the terms "total depravity" and "unconditional election" in Calvinism?
9. Describe the key tenets of hyper-Calvinism that Charles Haddon Spurgeon opposed.
10. What was Spurgeon's view on the universal call of the gospel in contrast to the hyper-Calvinists, and how did he justify his position?

Answer Key

1. Calvin respected Luther but felt Melancthon had diluted Luther's (and Augustine's) doctrines of grace and predestination. While Calvin related to Melancthon as a brother in Christ and appreciated his scholarship, he disagreed with Melancthon's synergism and preferred Luther's emphasis on monergism.

2. Calvin primarily devoted himself to writing his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (a systematic theology) and writing biblical commentaries on almost every book of the Bible. The *Institutes*, first written early in his life and expanded throughout, became his definitive understanding of the Christian faith and a foundational text for Reformed theology.
3. Theodore Beza succeeded Calvin as the leader of the Geneva Academy and accepted Calvin's theology. However, Beza pursued a more philosophical and systematic theological method, contributing to the development of Protestant scholasticism, which placed a greater emphasis on philosophical theology than Calvin's more biblically exegetical approach.
4. The central point of disagreement between Arminius and strong Calvinists like Gomarus concerned soteriology, specifically the doctrine of salvation. Arminius taught that God planned to save those he foresaw would believe, making election contingent on foreknowledge of faith, while the Calvinists emphasized God's sovereign and unconditional election.
5. The five points of Arminianism (as presented in the Remonstrants) are: (1) conditional election based on foreseen faith, (2) universal atonement making salvation possible for all, (3) total depravity modified by universal prevenient grace enabling free will to believe, (4) resistible grace that can be rejected, and (5) conditional perseverance of believers.
6. The Synod of Dort (1618-1619) was a general assembly of the Dutch Reformed Church convened as a church court to evaluate and judge the theological views of the Arminians, who had presented their objections in the Remonstrants. Its purpose was to respond to Arminianism and reaffirm the Reformed understanding of key doctrines of salvation.
7. The five points of Calvinism (TULIP) are: (T) Total Depravity, (U) Unconditional Election, (L) Limited Atonement, (I) Irresistible Grace, and (P) Perseverance of the Saints. These points were formulated as a direct, point-by-point response to the five points of the Arminian Remonstrance, emphasizing God's sovereignty in salvation.
8. Common misunderstandings include thinking "total depravity" means people are as bad as they could possibly be (rather than the whole person being affected by sin and unable to save themselves). "Unconditional election" is sometimes misinterpreted as arbitrary or without reason in God, rather than being based on God's own character and not on anything in humans.

9. Hyper-Calvinism, as opposed by Spurgeon, held that God only loves the elect, there is no universal gospel call (only an efficacious call to the elect), unbelief is not a sin for the non-elect because they cannot believe, and only those who accept their specific Calvinistic views are truly Christian. It minimized the desire of God to save all and the need to widely proclaim the gospel.
10. Spurgeon firmly believed in a universal gospel call, arguing that the command is to preach the gospel indiscriminately to all, as we do not know who the elect are. He cited the biblical invitation to "whosoever will" and maintained that those who reject Christ bring condemnation upon themselves, contrasting this with the hyper-Calvinist view that the gospel should only be preached to the elect.

Essay Format Questions

1. Compare and contrast the soteriological views of John Calvin and Jacob Arminius, focusing on their understanding of election, human free will, and the extent of the atonement.
2. Analyze the historical significance of the Synod of Dort. What were the primary theological issues at stake, and how did the Canons of Dort shape the development of Reformed theology?
3. Evaluate the five points of Arminianism and the five points of Calvinism as presented in the lecture. In what ways are they direct responses to each other, and what are the underlying theological principles that distinguish these two systems of thought?
4. Discuss Charles Haddon Spurgeon's critique of hyper-Calvinism. What were his main objections, and how did he attempt to reconcile the doctrines of divine sovereignty and the universal call to the gospel?
5. Trace the historical development of the doctrine of election from Augustine through Calvin, Beza, Arminius, and the Synod of Dort, highlighting the key figures and controversies that shaped its understanding within the Western Christian tradition.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Election:** God's sovereign act of choosing certain individuals for salvation before the creation of the world.
- **Historical Reconnaissance:** A survey or review of historical developments and figures related to a particular topic, in this case, the doctrine of election.
- **Synergism:** The belief that salvation involves cooperation between God and human free will.
- **Monergism:** The belief that God is the sole agent in salvation.
- **Christocentric:** Focused on Jesus Christ.
- **Biblical Exegesis:** The careful and systematic interpretation of Scripture.
- **Sovereignty of God:** God's ultimate authority and control over all things.
- **Predestination:** God's foreordination of all things that come to pass, including who will be saved and who will be condemned.
- **Free Will:** The capacity of humans to make choices independently.
- **Protestant Scholasticism:** A theological movement after the Reformation that emphasized a more systematic and philosophical approach to theology.
- **Soteriology:** The doctrine of salvation.
- **Belgic Confession:** A Reformed confession of faith written in the 16th century, foundational for Dutch Reformed churches.
- **Heidelberg Catechism:** A widely used Reformed catechism written in the 16th century, also foundational for Dutch Reformed churches.
- **Declaration of Sentiments:** Jacob Arminius's systematic defense of his theological views.
- **Canons of Dort:** The theological pronouncements issued by the Synod of Dort in response to the Arminian Remonstrance.
- **Three Forms of Unity:** The Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, which together serve as the doctrinal standards for many Reformed churches.

- **Remonstrants:** The name given to Arminius and his followers who presented their objections to the prevailing Calvinistic theology in the form of the Remonstrance.
- **Conditional Election:** The Arminian view that God's election is based on his foreknowledge of who will believe.
- **Universal Atonement:** The Arminian view that Jesus Christ died to make salvation possible for all people.
- **Total Depravity:** The doctrine that human nature is thoroughly corrupted by sin, rendering individuals incapable of saving themselves.
- **Prevenient Grace:** Divine grace that precedes human decision and, in Arminian theology, is universal, enabling all to choose to believe.
- **Resistible Grace:** The Arminian belief that God's grace can be resisted and ultimately rejected by individuals.
- **Conditional Perseverance:** The Arminian view that a believer's perseverance in faith is conditional upon their continued obedience and faith.
- **Synod:** A council or assembly of church leaders.
- **Unconditional Election:** The Calvinistic view that God's election is based solely on his sovereign will and good pleasure, not on anything foreseen in humanity.
- **Limited Atonement (or Definite/Particular Atonement):** The Calvinistic belief that Christ's atoning death was effective only for the elect, those whom God had chosen for salvation.
- **Irresistible Grace (or Efficacious Grace):** The Calvinistic doctrine that God's saving grace will unfailingly accomplish its purpose in the elect, drawing them to faith.
- **Perseverance of the Saints:** The Calvinistic teaching that all those who are truly regenerated and justified will persevere in faith to the end.
- **TULIP:** An acronym representing the five points of Calvinism: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints.
- **Common Grace:** God's general goodness and blessings bestowed on all humanity, regardless of their belief.
- **Hyper-Calvinism:** An extreme form of Calvinism that tends to deny the universal call of the gospel and the responsibility of the non-elect to believe.

- **Efficacious Call:** God's call to salvation that is effective in bringing the elect to faith.
- **Indiscriminate Preaching:** The practice of offering the gospel to all people without exception.
- **Penal Substitution:** The theological doctrine that Christ's death on the cross was a substitutionary punishment for the sins of humanity, satisfying God's justice.
- **Governmental Theory of Atonement:** A theory of atonement that emphasizes Christ's death as a demonstration of God's justice and his upholding of the moral order.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Salvation, Session 5, Election—Historical Reconnaissance, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Election and Soteriological History

1. What is the doctrine of election as discussed by Dr. Peterson, and who are some of the key historical figures involved in its development?

Dr. Peterson introduces the doctrine of election as God's choosing people for salvation before the creation of the world. He traces its historical understanding through several key figures. Augustine is identified as an early influential figure, whose views were later embraced by Martin Luther. John Calvin further developed the doctrine, emphasizing God's sovereignty in election. Following Calvin, Theodore Beza continued and systematized Calvinistic theology. The discussion then shifts to Jacob Arminius, who, though initially taught within this Calvinistic framework, developed a different perspective on salvation, leading to significant theological debates.

2. How did John Calvin understand and articulate the doctrine of predestination?

John Calvin, the reformer of Geneva, devoted himself to biblical exegesis to build a Christocentric theology, with a strong emphasis on God's sovereignty. He articulated his views on predestination in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, stating that God, by an eternal and immutable counsel, has determined whom he would admit to salvation and whom he would condemn to destruction. Calvin saw this as a clear doctrine of Scripture and defended it against objections concerning free will. He acknowledged a significant debt to Augustine's theology in formulating his views.

3. Who was Jacob Arminius, and what were his main disagreements with the prevailing Calvinistic understanding of salvation?

Jacob Arminius was a Dutch theologian who studied under Theodore Beza in Geneva. While initially within the Calvinistic tradition, he later developed disagreements concerning the plan of salvation. His primary departure from Calvinism centered on the role of human free will in salvation. Against the Augustinian-Lutheran-Calvinist view, Arminius taught that God planned to save all those whom he foresaw would believe in Christ. This made election conditional upon God's foreknowledge of human faith, contrasting with the Calvinistic view of unconditional election based solely on God's sovereign will. Arminius also posited a universal prevenient grace that enables everyone to exercise saving faith.

4. What were the "Five Points of Arminianism" (or the Remonstrants), and what did each point essentially argue?

The Five Points of Arminianism, articulated in the Remonstrance, were a systematic defense of Arminius's views:

- **Conditional Election:** God chooses individuals for salvation based on his foreknowledge of their faith.
- **Universal Atonement:** Jesus Christ died to make salvation possible for everyone, though it is not effective until one believes.
- **Total Depravity/Prevenient Grace:** While humanity is totally depraved and unable to save itself, God provides a universal prevenient grace that restores free will sufficiently to choose Christ.
- **Resistible Grace:** Individuals can resist and ultimately reject God's grace, leading to their perdition.
- **Conditional Perseverance:** The Remonstrants were uncertain whether believers could fall away from grace and be finally lost, suggesting it was a point requiring further debate.

5. What was the Synod of Dort, and what were the "Five Points of Calvinism" (or the Canons of Dort) formulated in response to the Arminian Remonstrance?

The Synod of Dort (1618-1619) was a general assembly of the Dutch Reformed Church convened to evaluate and judge the Arminian views presented in the Remonstrance. In response, the Synod formulated the "Five Points of Calvinism" (often remembered by the acronym TULIP) as a point-by-point rebuttal:

- **Total Depravity:** Sin has affected the entire human being, rendering individuals unable to save themselves.
- **Unconditional Election:** God's choice of individuals for salvation is based solely on his sovereign will and good pleasure, not on any foreseen merit or faith in them.
- **Limited (or Definite/Particular) Atonement:** Jesus Christ died specifically to save the elect, and his atoning work effectively accomplishes their salvation.
- **Irresistible Grace:** When God calls the elect to salvation, his grace is efficacious and will unfailingly bring them to faith.

- **Perseverance of the Saints:** Those whom God has saved will persevere in faith to the end, though they may stumble, they will not totally and finally fall away.

6. How did Dr. Peterson characterize "hyper-Calvinism," and what were some of its key tenets that Charles Haddon Spurgeon opposed?

Dr. Peterson describes hyper-Calvinism as an extreme form of Calvinism that elevates certain biblical statements concerning God's sovereignty in salvation while minimizing others. Some key tenets of hyper-Calvinism, which Charles Haddon Spurgeon strongly opposed, included:

- The belief that God loves only the elect and not the non-elect.
- The rejection of a universal gospel call, asserting that the gospel should only be preached to the elect, as opposed to the Canons of Dort's call to preach indiscriminately.
- The denial that unbelief is a sin because the non-elect supposedly cannot believe.
- The judgment that any views not fully aligned with their specific Calvinistic system are not Christian.

Spurgeon, while a staunch Calvinist himself, believed in both God's sovereign love for the elect and a general love for all humanity, as well as the necessity of a universal gospel call.

7. What is the significance of the Synod of Dort's canons in relation to the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism?

The canons of the Synod of Dort were added to the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism to form what are known as the "Three Forms of Unity." These three documents constitute the official doctrinal standards for Reformed churches in the Netherlands and many Reformed churches around the world. The addition of the Canons of Dort officially reaffirmed the Dutch Reformed Church's commitment to an Augustinian-Calvinistic understanding of predestination in response to the challenge posed by Arminianism.

8. According to Dr. Peterson, how should the Five Points of Calvinism be understood in relation to the broader Reformed faith?

Dr. Peterson emphasizes that the Five Points of Calvinism, as formulated at the Synod of Dort, should be understood as a specific rebuttal to the Five Points of Arminianism. They do not represent the entirety of the Reformed faith, which encompasses a much wider range of theological truths. To view the Five Points as the sum and substance of Reformed theology is a misrepresentation. They were developed in a specific historical context to address particular points of controversy and should be seen as a part of a larger and more comprehensive theological system.