

Dr. Roger Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 6, John Calvin's Theology Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 6, John Calvin's Theology, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This excerpt from Dr. Roger Green's lecture series, "Reformation to the Present," specifically Session 6, concentrates on **John Calvin's theology**. The lecture initially recaps prior discussions on **Calvin's life and key works**, particularly his *Institutes*. It then explores **Calvin's theological disagreements with the Roman Catholic Church**, focusing on doctrines of humankind, God, and the church. A significant portion examines **Calvin's understanding of the sacraments**, contrasting his view with Catholic and other Protestant perspectives. Finally, the lecture introduces **Calvin's doctrine of predestination and his theory of the two kingdoms**, setting the stage for further discussion and analysis.

**2. 22 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 6 – Double
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3. Briefing Document: Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 6, John Calvin's Theology

Briefing Document: Calvin's Theology and the Catholic Response

Overview:

This document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented in Dr. Roger Green's sixth lecture on "Calvin's Theology" within his "Reformation to the Present" church history course. The lecture focuses on key theological disagreements between John Calvin and the Roman Catholic Church, specifically concerning the doctrines of humankind, God, the church (including ministry and sacraments), predestination, and the two kingdoms. The lecture concludes by introducing the Roman Catholic Church's response to the Reformation, known as the Counter-Reformation or Catholic Reformation, focusing initially on the Inquisition.

Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

I. Review of Calvin's Theology (Context):

- The lecture builds upon previous discussions of Calvin's life and work, particularly his seminal work, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, and the theological issues where Calvin diverged from the Roman Catholic Church.
- Dr. Green emphasizes that Calvin left the Roman Catholic Church willingly, unlike Luther who was excommunicated.
- The lecture revisits previous discussions on Calvin's differing views on the doctrine of humankind and the doctrine of God compared to the Catholic Church.

II. Doctrine of the Church (Continued):

- **Ministry of the Church:** Calvin held the office of minister in high esteem, distinguishing it from the "priesthood of all believers." He believed in two main offices: pastor-teacher and deacon.
- **Sacraments:** Calvin reduced the number of sacraments from the Roman Catholic Church's seven to two: **baptism** and the **Lord's Supper**. This was based on his interpretation of Scripture.
- He positioned his view on the sacraments as a middle ground between the Roman Catholic Church and Zwingli.

- **Baptism:** For Calvin, baptism is an initiation into the new community, the body of Christ on earth. It is not merely a private experience but involves the community's commitment to nurture the baptized in faith.
- **Lord's Supper (Eucharist/Communion):** Calvin disagreed with Zwingli's view that the Lord's Supper was purely symbolic or a memorial.
- He also rejected the Roman Catholic doctrine of **transubstantiation**, the belief that the substance of the bread and wine literally changes into the body and blood of Christ while the "accidents" (external appearances) remain the same. Calvin saw this as rooted in "scholastic philosophical tradition" rather than biblical teaching.
- Calvin also differed from Luther, who believed Christ descended from heaven and was fully present "in, with, and under" the elements during communion.
- Calvin believed that in the Lord's Supper, believers are "taken up into the presence of Christ." While he acknowledged this couldn't be fully explained ("You can't reason this. You don't want to be a scholastic and say, I'm going to tell you exactly how this happens"), he affirmed Christ's real presence in a spiritual sense.

III. Doctrine of Predestination:

- Dr. Green introduces this controversial doctrine with three important introductory remarks:
 1. Predestination is **not Calvin's most important doctrine** and should not be the sole basis for judging his theology. It appears later in the *Institutes*.
 2. Calvin believed in **double predestination** (or double election), the idea that God has predestined some to salvation and others to damnation. This differs from Augustine and Luther, who primarily focused on the predestination of the saved ("single predestination").
 3. Calvin believed this doctrine **protected the honor and freedom of God**.
- **Key aspects of Calvin's doctrine of predestination:**
 - Christ as the Mirror of Election:** Jesus Christ is the perfect example of one who was elected before the world began. "He said that Christ is the mirror of the election."
 - Relationship to Faith:** Election comes first, and then God gives the gift of faith to those who are elect to embrace their salvation. "Election comes first, and faith then follows as a gift from God."

- **Relationship to Good Works:** Election is not based on good works. God elects according to his sovereign will. However, good works will follow as a result of being elected. Calvin criticized the Roman Catholic system of penance as relying on "good works kind of a thing" to earn God's favor.
- **Assurance of Election:** Believers can have assurance of their election through the "testimony of the Holy Spirit." This doctrine aimed to provide believers with a sense of security in their salvation, contrasting with what Calvin saw as a lack of assurance in medieval Catholicism.
- **Damnation:** Those who are damned are damned because of their sins and rebellion against God. Calvin argued that all humanity deserves damnation, and God's election of some to salvation is an act of grace.
- **Glory of God:** The entire doctrine of predestination is ultimately for the glory of God.
- **Breaking with Nominalism:** While influenced by nominalism, Calvin disagreed with the idea that "God's will is God's will no matter what." He believed God's will, including predestination, is just, merciful, and loving, as demonstrated in Scripture. "He says God's will is right, but the reason we know it's right is because it comes forth in justice. It comes forth in mercy. It comes forth in love."
- **Election Before Foreknowledge:** Calvin argued that election comes before God's foreknowledge. God doesn't elect based on who he foresees will have faith; rather, he elects, and therefore foreknows who will be saved and lost.
- **Criticisms of Calvin's Doctrine:** Even in his time, Calvin's doctrine faced criticism:
 1. **Scholasticism:** Followers like Theodore Beza developed highly detailed and complex explanations of predestination, moving towards the very scholasticism Calvin sought to avoid. Dr. Green showed a complex diagram by Beza as an example.
 2. **Anxiety and Lack of Assurance:** Contrary to Calvin's intent, the doctrine caused anxiety and uncertainty for some who questioned whether they were among the elect or the damned. Martin Luther's personal struggle with assurance despite believing in predestination (though not double election) was cited as an example.
 3. **Questioning the Nature of God:** Critics questioned whether a God who predestined some to damnation aligned with the biblical portrayal of a loving and just God.

IV. Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms:

- Calvin distinguished between the **kingdom of God** (life in Christ, the church) and the **civil order/kingdom of humankind** (civil government).
 - He argued that these are two distinct kingdoms ordained by God but should not be confused, as the Anabaptists did by equating the kingdom of God with civil government.
 - Calvin sought a middle ground, avoiding both extreme subservience to civil government and anarchy.
1. **Functions of Civil Government:**
 - Civic Function:** Maintaining public order.
 - Religious Function:** Protecting the church from blasphemy and sacrilege, and even establishing the public structure of the church (through taxes, building, hiring ministers – a practice still seen in some European countries, though not in the US due to the separation of church and state).
 - **Role of Civic Authorities:** Calvin held civic authorities (magistrates, princes, judges, etc.) in high esteem, believing they were in their positions by God's providence and should be honored. Dr. Green contrasts this with modern tendencies to "belittle politicians."
 - **Just Wars:** Calvin, following Augustine, allowed for just wars as a means to maintain public order. He was not a pacifist.
 - **Primacy of God's Law:** If there is a conflict between civil law and God's law, Christians must always follow God's law and be willing to suffer the consequences.

V. Response of the Roman Catholic Church to the Reformation (Introduction):

- The Roman Catholic Church's response is often called the **Counter-Reformation** or the **Catholic Reformation**.
- Dr. Green will examine this response through three key aspects:
 1. **The Inquisition** (visceral response)
 2. **The Jesuits (Society of Jesus)** (more measured response)
 3. **The Council of Trent** (very measured response)

- **The Inquisition:** Definition: "The Inquisition is a tribunal established by the Pope to deal with heresy."
- Established by **Pope Gregory IX** (1227-1241) as the "Commission of the Inquisition" to address pre-Reformation heresies.
- 1. **Method of the Inquisition: Solemn Assembly:** Calling all townspeople together and offering leniency for immediate confession of heresy. This aimed to create fear and encourage self-incrimination.
- 2. **Systematic Search and Torture:** After a period, a systematic search for heretics would commence. By 1252, torture was allowed to extract confessions. Two witnesses were sufficient for conviction.
- 3. **Handing Over to the State:** The church did not execute heretics. Convicted heretics were handed over to state officials, who would often burn them at the stake (as seen later with Servetus) or impose other punishments like beatings.
- **Renewal of the Inquisition: Pope Clement VII** (during the Reformation) renewed the languishing Inquisition, bringing it "back to life again." This will be discussed further in the next lecture.

Quotes:

- "He said that Christ is the mirror of the election." (Regarding Christ as the perfect example of election)
- "Election comes first, and faith then follows as a gift from God." (Explaining the relationship between election and faith)
- "You can't reason this. You don't want to be a scholastic and say, I'm going to tell you exactly how this happens." (About the mystery of how believers are taken up to Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper)
- "God's will is right, but the reason we know it's right is because it comes forth in justice. It comes forth in mercy. It comes forth in love." (Describing Calvin's break with nominalism regarding God's will)
- "The Inquisition is a tribunal established by the Pope to deal with heresy." (Definition of the Inquisition)

Conclusion:

This lecture provides a comprehensive overview of key aspects of John Calvin's theology, highlighting his points of divergence with the Roman Catholic Church. The discussion spans the nature of the church, the sacraments, the complex doctrine of predestination, and the framework of the two kingdoms. The lecture concludes by setting the stage for understanding the Roman Catholic Church's response to the Reformation through the lens of the Inquisition as an initial, forceful reaction.

4. Study Guide: Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 6, John Calvin's Theology

Study Guide: Calvin's Theology and the Catholic Response

Key Topics:

- Calvin's disagreements with the Roman Catholic Church
- Calvin's understanding of the Church (ministry, offices, sacraments)
- Calvin's doctrine of the two sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper)
- Calvin's doctrine of Predestination (double election, its characteristics, and criticisms)
- Calvin's doctrine of the Two Kingdoms (Kingdom of God and Civil Order)
- The Roman Catholic Church's response to the Reformation (Inquisition, Jesuits, Council of Trent)
- The Inquisition: definition, historical context (Gregory IX and Clement VII), and methods
- The Society of Jesus (brief mention of its role as a measured response)
- The Council of Trent (brief mention as a more measured and lengthy response)

Ten Short-Answer Quiz Questions:

1. What were the three main areas of theological disagreement between John Calvin and the Roman Catholic Church that were discussed in the lecture?
2. According to Calvin, what are the only two sacraments, and what was his basis for this belief?
3. Contrast Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper with both Zwingli's and the Roman Catholic Church's doctrine of transubstantiation.
4. Describe Calvin's understanding of baptism and its significance for the community.
5. Explain Calvin's doctrine of double predestination in your own words.
6. According to Calvin, what is the relationship between election and faith, and between election and good works?

7. What were two of the criticisms leveled against Calvin's doctrine of predestination, even in his own time?
8. Outline the two distinct kingdoms in Calvin's doctrine of the Two Kingdoms and explain why it was important for him to differentiate them.
9. What were the two primary functions of the civil government according to Calvin?
10. Define the Inquisition and briefly explain its initial purpose and how it was later revived during the Reformation.

Answer Key:

1. Calvin disagreed with the Roman Catholic Church primarily on their doctrine of humankind, their understanding of God, and their understanding of the church. These disagreements formed the basis of his reform movement.
2. Calvin believed there are only two sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper. His basis for this was Scripture; he found a warrant only for these two in the Bible and not for the other five sacraments recognized by the Catholic Church.
3. Zwingli viewed the Lord's Supper as purely symbolic, a memorial. The Roman Catholic Church taught transubstantiation, the literal transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. Calvin took a middle ground, believing Christ is truly present spiritually during the Lord's Supper, with believers being lifted up to His presence.
4. For Calvin, baptism is the rite of initiation into the new community, the body of Christ on earth. It is not merely a private experience but a community event where the church covenants to nurture the baptized in faith.
5. Calvin's doctrine of double predestination asserts that God, before creation, sovereignly elected some individuals for salvation and others for damnation. This election is based solely on God's will and not on any foreseen merit or action of humanity.
6. In Calvin's theology, election precedes and causes faith; God grants the gift of faith to those He has elected, enabling them to embrace their salvation. Good works are not the basis of election but are a consequence of it, flowing from the believer's gratitude as a child of God.

7. Two criticisms of Calvin's predestination doctrine were that it led to complex scholastic explanations that were not pastorally helpful and that, despite Calvin's intention, it caused anxiety and a lack of assurance among believers who feared they might be among the damned.
8. Calvin's doctrine of the Two Kingdoms distinguishes between the Kingdom of God (spiritual realm, church) and the civil order (earthly government). He believed it crucial not to confuse these, as the Anabaptists did, because each has distinct functions ordained by God.
9. According to Calvin, the civil government has two primary functions: a civic function of maintaining public order and a religious function of protecting the church from blasphemy and ensuring its public structure.
10. The Inquisition was a tribunal established by the Pope to address heresy. Initially set up by Gregory IX before the Reformation to deal with pre-existing dissenting views, it was later renewed by Pope Clement VII during the Reformation as a key part of the Catholic Church's response to the Protestant movement.

Five Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the key differences between Calvin's understanding of the sacraments, particularly the Lord's Supper, and the views held by both the Roman Catholic Church and other Protestant reformers like Zwingli and Luther.
2. Discuss the central tenets of Calvin's doctrine of predestination, including his arguments for it and the major theological and pastoral challenges it presented during his time and beyond.
3. Explain Calvin's doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, highlighting its implications for the relationship between the church and the state, and how it navigates the potential extremes of subservience and anarchy.
4. Compare and contrast the ways in which the Roman Catholic Church responded to the Reformation through the Inquisition and the Society of Jesus, considering the nature and long-term impact of each approach.
5. Evaluate the significance of the Council of Trent as a response to the Reformation, considering its objectives, its key theological affirmations, and its lasting influence on the Roman Catholic Church.

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Sacrament:** A religious ceremony or act that is regarded as an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, instituted by Christ.
- **Transubstantiation:** The Roman Catholic doctrine that during the Eucharist, the substance of the bread and wine is miraculously transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ, while the outward appearances (accidents) remain the same.
- **Real Presence:** The belief, particularly held by Lutherans, that Christ is truly and substantially present "in, with, and under" the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper.
- **Memorialism:** The view, notably held by Zwingli, that the Lord's Supper is primarily a symbolic act of remembrance of Christ's sacrifice.
- **Predestination:** The theological doctrine that all events have been willed by God, often specifically referring to God's eternal decree determining who will be saved and who will be damned.
- **Double Election:** The Calvinistic doctrine that God has predestined some to eternal life (election) and others to eternal damnation (reprobation).
- **Assurance:** The conviction held by a believer that they are among those chosen by God for salvation.
- **Two Kingdoms Doctrine:** Calvin's teaching that God rules humanity through two distinct realms: the spiritual kingdom (church) and the civil kingdom (state), each with its own authority and responsibilities.
- **Inquisition:** A formal tribunal established by the Roman Catholic Church, particularly during the medieval and early modern periods, to investigate and suppress heresy.
- **Heresy:** A belief or opinion contrary to orthodox religious (especially Christian) doctrine.
- **Scholasticism:** A philosophical and theological system dominant in medieval Europe, emphasizing rigorous logical analysis and the synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy with Christian doctrine.
- **Nominalism:** A philosophical view holding that general or abstract terms exist only as names and do not refer to real entities. In theology, it sometimes emphasized God's absolute will independent of any inherent goodness or justice.

- **Council of Trent:** The 19th ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church (1545-1563), held in three sessions, that was a major part of the Counter-Reformation, responding to the Protestant Reformation and defining Catholic doctrine.
- **Society of Jesus (Jesuits):** A Catholic religious order founded by Ignatius of Loyola, known for its missionary, educational, and counter-reformational work.

5. FAQs Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 6, John Calvin's Theology, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Calvin's Theology and the Catholic Response

1. What were the main theological disagreements John Calvin had with the Roman Catholic Church?

Calvin differed from the Roman Catholic Church on several key doctrines. Primarily, he disagreed on the doctrine of humankind, the understanding of God, and the nature of the church. Specifically regarding the church, he reduced the number of sacraments from seven to two (baptism and the Lord's Supper), rejecting the biblical warrant for the other five. He also opposed the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation in the Lord's Supper. Furthermore, while the lecture doesn't elaborate on all disagreements, it highlights these as central points of divergence that led Calvin to leave the Catholic Church and join the Reform movement.

2. How did Calvin understand the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and how did his view differ from both the Catholic Church and other Reformers like Zwingli and Luther?

Calvin believed in only two sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper, finding biblical basis only for these. He viewed baptism as an initiation into the Christian community, not just a private experience, emphasizing the community's role in nurturing the baptized. Regarding the Lord's Supper, Calvin took a middle ground. He disagreed with Zwingli's purely symbolic view, asserting that Christ is truly present during communion, though not in a physical, localized sense. He also differed from the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which held that the substance of the bread and wine literally becomes the body and blood of Christ. Unlike Luther, who believed Christ descends from heaven to be present during the Lord's Supper, Calvin taught that believers are spiritually taken up into the presence of Christ during the sacrament.

3. What is Calvin's doctrine of predestination, including the concept of "double election," and what were his primary motivations for teaching it?

Calvin's doctrine of predestination posits that God has eternally chosen some for salvation and others for damnation. This is known as "double election." He emphasized that this divine choice occurs before creation and is based solely on God's sovereign will, not on human merit or foreseen faith. For Calvin, Christ is the perfect example and "mirror" of election. He taught that election precedes and grants the gift of faith, and that good works are a result of election, not a cause. His primary motivations were to protect the honor and freedom of God, emphasizing God's absolute sovereignty in salvation. He also aimed to

provide believers with assurance of their salvation through the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

4. What were some of the criticisms or concerns raised about Calvin's doctrine of predestination, even in his own time? Several criticisms emerged regarding Calvin's doctrine of predestination. One concern was that his followers, like Theodore Beza, elaborated on it in overly detailed, scholastic ways that moved beyond simple biblical understanding, potentially obscuring its pastoral intent. Another major issue was that instead of providing assurance, the doctrine caused anxiety for some who worried about whether they were among the elect or the damned. Even Martin Luther, who believed in predestination (though not double election in Calvin's sense), struggled with personal assurance regarding his own election. Finally, some questioned the nature of a God who would predestine individuals to damnation, raising concerns about divine justice and human freedom.

5. Explain Calvin's doctrine of the "two kingdoms." What are these two kingdoms, and how should Christians relate to them? Calvin's doctrine of the two kingdoms distinguishes between the spiritual kingdom of God (Christ's rule, the church, spiritual life) and the earthly or civil kingdom (civil government, societal order). He taught that God is the author of both, but they should not be confused, unlike the Anabaptists who blurred these lines. Christians live in both realms. Regarding the civil kingdom, Calvin advocated for neither extreme subservience nor anarchy. While believers should honor civil authorities as appointed by God's providence to maintain public order and even serve a religious function (protecting the church), this obedience is not absolute. If civil law conflicts with God's law, God's law must be followed, even if it entails suffering the consequences.

6. According to Calvin, what are the primary functions of the civil government? How does this compare to modern understandings, particularly in a context like the United States with the separation of church and state? For Calvin, the civil government had two primary functions: a civic function of maintaining public order and a religious function of protecting the church from blasphemy and ensuring its public structure (including support through taxes). This contrasts significantly with the modern understanding in countries like the United States, which upholds a separation of church and state. In the US, the government's role is primarily focused on maintaining public order and ensuring justice, without direct involvement in establishing or financially supporting religious institutions. While Calvin believed the government should actively support the church, this concept is largely rejected in the context of the separation of

church and state, though the government may still indirectly support religious freedom and organizations through policies like tax exemptions.

7. How did the Roman Catholic Church respond to the Reformation, and what were the key elements of this response as introduced in the lecture? The Roman Catholic Church responded to the Reformation in what is often called the Counter-Reformation or Catholic Reformation. The lecture introduces three key elements of this response: the Inquisition, the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), and the Council of Trent. The Inquisition represents a more immediate and forceful reaction aimed at suppressing heresy through investigation, confession (sometimes through torture), and handing over convicted heretics to the state for punishment. The Society of Jesus represents a more measured response through the establishment of a religious order dedicated to education, missionary work, and defending the Catholic faith. The Council of Trent represents a much more comprehensive and long-term response, involving an 18-year process to clarify Catholic doctrines and address issues raised by the Reformation.

8. What was the Inquisition, what were its methods, and why did it predate the Reformation as traditionally understood? The Inquisition was a tribunal established by the Pope to deal with heresy. Its methods, as outlined in the lecture, involved a three-part process. First, upon arriving in a town, inquisitors would call a solemn assembly and offer a period for heretics to confess with a lighter punishment. Second, they would conduct a systematic search, and by 1252, torture was permitted to elicit confessions. Two witnesses were sufficient for conviction. Third, convicted heretics were handed over to the state, which would typically burn them at the stake or impose other punishments. The Inquisition predates the traditional start of the Reformation (with Martin Luther) because even before Luther and Calvin, there were various movements and ideas within or challenging the Roman Catholic Church that were considered heretical by the papacy. Pope Gregory IX established the Commission of the Inquisition in the 13th century to address these earlier perceived threats to Catholic doctrine and authority. The Inquisition was later renewed and intensified during the actual Reformation period under Pope Clement VII.