

## **Dr. Roger Green, American Christianity, Session 4, Denominationalism in the American Colonies Resources from NotebookLM**

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

### **1. Abstract of Green, American Christianity, Session 4, Denominationalism in the American Colonies, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

**Dr. Roger Green's lecture explores the establishment and diversification of religious denominations in the American colonies.** The session traces the early presence of groups like Quakers and Baptists in Rhode Island, including the theological split between Calvinist and Arminian Baptists and the emergence of the Six-Principle Baptists. **The discussion then moves to the denominational landscape of various colonies, highlighting Congregationalism in New England, the Dutch Reformed Church in New York, and the Quaker influence in Pennsylvania.** The lecture also examines the founding of religious havens like Maryland under Lord Baltimore for Catholics and analyzes the challenges and establishment of the Anglican Church in Virginia. **Ultimately, the session concludes by noting the religious diversity, the absence of a single dominant denomination, and the transplanted nature of these European-based churches in the American colonies by the early colonial period.**

**2. 23 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Green, American Christianity, Session 4 – Double click icon  
to play in Windows media player or go to the  
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link  
there (Church History → American Christianity).**



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### 3. Briefing Document: Green, American Christianity, Session 4, Denominationalism in the American Colonies

#### Briefing Document: Denominationalism in the American Colonies

**Overview:** This document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Roger Green in Session 4 of his lecture series on American Christianity, focusing on the development of denominationalism in the American colonies. The session covers the early establishment and diversification of religious groups, primarily in Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, leading up to broader conclusions about the state of religious life in the colonies.

#### Main Themes and Important Ideas:

##### 1. Rhode Island: A Cradle of Religious Diversity (Continuing from previous session):

- Rhode Island, under the influence of Roger Williams, was established as a place of significant religious freedom, attracting diverse groups.
- The session begins by revisiting the importance of Roger Williams and Rhode Island as a haven for religious minorities.
- The rise and settlement of Quakers in Rhode Island (though not exclusively) is highlighted as a key development.

##### 2. The Emergence and Division of Baptists in Rhode Island:

- The lecture introduces the early Baptist presence in Rhode Island, noting the existence of both English and Welsh Baptists.
- A key theological division within the Baptist community is explored: the split between **Calvinist Baptists** (following John Calvin's predestinarian theology) and **Arminian Baptists** (named after Jacob Arminius, emphasizing free will in accepting or rejecting God).
- "Of course, Calvinist Baptists were predestinarian folks who believed that some people were predestined to be saved and others were predestined or elected to be lost."
- "And so they look at Arminius as a proponent of freedom of the will to say yes or no to God."

- Roger Williams, known for his advocacy of civil and political freedom, naturally aligned himself with the Arminian Baptists due to their emphasis on freedom of the will in religious life.
- "Well, you know that he's going to be an Arminian Baptist when he becomes a Baptist, because the Baptists emphasize freedom of the will."
- Arminian Baptists in Rhode Island adopted the name **Six-Principle Baptists**, grounding their denominational doctrine in Hebrews 6:1-2, which outlines six basic principles of Christianity: repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.
- "And the Six-Principle Baptists took on Hebrews 6, 1, and 2. So, Hebrews chapter 6, verses 1 and 2, was their kind of denominational doctrine."

### 3. Continued History of the Baptists and the Founding of Brown University:

- Despite being a small group in the 17th century, the Baptists began to gain momentum in the 18th century.
- The founding of **Brown University** in 1764 (originally in Warren, Rhode Island, later moved to Providence) by Baptists is discussed.
- "They founded the university in 1764, and it was called Brown University."
- The initial purpose of Brown University was to train Baptist preachers and to counter what some founders perceived as a liberal drift away from traditional Calvinist doctrines within the Rhode Island Baptist community.
- "It was founded by the Baptists to train Baptist preachers. It was also founded because it was believed by the founders that the Baptists in Rhode Island had become liberal and weren't really maintaining their biblical stance."

### 4. Other Early Baptist Denominations:

- Two other early Baptist denominations are briefly mentioned:
- **Particular Baptists:** Emphasized believers' baptism (adult baptism) and reaffirmed this doctrine.
- "The Particular Baptists because they believed only in believers' baptism, of course, which meant adult baptism..."

- **Seventh Day Baptists:** Founded in 1666, distinguished by their belief in observing the Sabbath on Friday night and Saturday, drawing a parallel to the later Adventist movement.
- "They were founded in 1666 because they believed that Christians lived up to the nine commandments but not to the tenth commandment, to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy."

## 5. Denominationalism Takes Hold in Other Colonies:

- The lecture shifts to discuss the establishment of denominations in other key American colonies.
- **New England:** Predominantly Congregationalism, formed from the union of Puritans and Pilgrims. However, other groups like Quakers, Baptists, and Anglicans eventually gained a foothold.
- "Denominational makeup is mainly congregational. Remember, the Puritans and the Pilgrims kind of came together and formed Congregationalism."
- **New York (formerly New Netherlands):** Initially dominated by the Dutch Reformed Church, brought by Dutch traders from Holland. Peter Stuyvesant, the Dutch governor, attempted to establish the Dutch Reformed Church as the official church. The English takeover in 1664, renaming it New York, led to increased religious tolerance, allowing Anglicans, Quakers, and even a small number of Roman Catholics to settle.
- "New York was founded originally as a Dutch colony, and of course, it was founded predominantly as a Dutch trading colony... the people who came to this Dutch trading colony from Holland are from a denomination, a church group called the Dutch Reformed."
- **Pennsylvania (under William Penn):** Founded by William Penn as a haven for religious freedom based on Quaker principles. This attracted a wide variety of religious groups, including German immigrants (primarily Lutherans and groups like the Dunkers), Baptists, and Presbyterians. Philadelphia became a significant center for denominational growth.
- "He's going to establish this place as a place of religious freedom, religious liberty, because I'm a Quaker, and I know as a Quaker what it was to be under state oppression..."

- "Hence, no other colony has presented such a variety of religious bodies as Pennsylvania."
- The first Baptist association in America was formed in Philadelphia in 1707, reflecting the autonomy of local Baptist congregations while recognizing the benefits of association for support and discussion.
- The first Presbytery in America, rooted in Calvinist theology, was founded in Philadelphia in 1706.
- **Maryland (under Lord Baltimore):** Founded by the Roman Catholic Lord Baltimore (George Calvert) as a place of religious toleration. However, while Roman Catholics were welcomed, Anglicans formed the majority of early settlers. The Church of England (Anglican Church) was eventually established as the state church through the efforts of Thomas Bray, who served as the Bishop of London's commissary. Bray also founded the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG). Despite the Anglican establishment, other groups felt comfortable settling in Maryland.
- "He received a charter in 1632... and he decided that he wanted to establish a place in the new world under the aegis of religious toleration and religious liberty. That led us to Maryland..."
- "...the Church of England, the Anglican Church was established as what we might call the state church of Maryland."
- **Virginia:** Founded in 1607 (Jamestown) and predominantly Anglican. Due to the scattered nature of settlements, lay vestries (local bodies of laymen) gained significant control over parishes, leading to concerns within the Anglican hierarchy. James Blair was sent to Virginia in 1685 to reassert control and establish the Anglican church more firmly. He also founded the College of William and Mary in 1693.
- "Virginia was founded in 1607 as Jamestown, Virginia, after King James... By the time you get into the 1620s and 1630s, there are people in Virginia. There are people there who are basically Anglican."
- "The Bishop of London sent over a man who became very important in American church history, and that man's name was James Blair."

## 6. Initial Conclusions on the State of Religious Life Leading Up to the Colonial Period:

- **Religious Diversity:** By the time of the colonial period, there was significant religious diversity across the American colonies.
- "By the time you get to the colonial period, there's religious diversity throughout the colonies."
- **No Single Dominant Denomination:** Unlike Europe, no single religious denomination held dominance across all the colonies. While certain denominations were prominent in specific colonies (e.g., Congregationalism in Massachusetts, Anglicanism in Virginia), there was no unified religious landscape.
- "There is no single dominant denomination in the colonial period."
- **Transplanted Churches:** The initial denominations in the colonies were primarily transplants from Europe. No major denomination had yet originated on American soil.
- "The churches that we've talked about here basically are transplanted churches. The denominations we've talked about primarily come from Europe."
- **Increased Freedom:** Transplanted denominations experienced a greater degree of freedom and liberty in America compared to the restraints they faced in Europe.
- "They find over here a real freedom, a real liberty that they didn't experience in their church life in Europe."
- **Early Signs of Decline:** Many established churches began to experience a decline in membership and allegiance in the second generation after transplantation, posing a challenge for their future.
- "A lot of these kinds of established churches found when they got over here, they were okay for the first or second generation... But a lot of these denominations that came over started to find themselves in decline."

**Next Steps (as indicated in the lecture):** The next session will continue to explore the reasons for the decline in established churches and further analyze the state of religious life in the colonies.

## **4. Study Guide: Green, American Christianity, Session 4, Denominationalism in the American Colonies**

### **Denominationalism in the American Colonies: A Study Guide**

#### **Key Topics:**

- Roger Williams and Religious Diversity in Rhode Island
- The Rise of the Quakers
- Baptist Denominations in Rhode Island (Calvinist, Arminian/Six-Principle)
- Early Baptist History (Brown University, Particular Baptists, Seventh Day Baptists)
- Denominational Makeup of New England (Congregationalism, Anglicans)
- Religious Landscape of Rhode Island
- The Dutch Reformed in New Netherlands (New York)
- Peter Stuyvesant and Religious Intolerance in New Netherlands
- English Takeover of New York and Increased Religious Tolerance
- William Penn and the Founding of Pennsylvania as a Haven for Religious Freedom
- German Immigrants in Pennsylvania (Lutherans, Dunkers)
- Early Baptist Association in Philadelphia (1707)
- First Presbytery in Philadelphia (1706)
- Lord Baltimore and the Founding of Maryland with Religious Toleration for Catholics
- The Anglican Church as the Established Church in Maryland
- Thomas Bray and the Establishment of the Anglican Church in Maryland (SPCK, SPG)
- The Anglican Church in Virginia and the Role of Lay Vestries
- James Blair and the Reassertion of Anglican Authority in Virginia
- Founding of William and Mary College (1693)

- Early Religious Life in the Colonies: Diversity, Lack of a Single Dominant Denomination, Transplanted Churches, Increased Freedom, and Early Signs of Decline in Established Churches.

### Quiz:

1. What was the significance of Roger Williams in the context of denominationalism in the American colonies, particularly in Rhode Island?
2. Describe the key difference in theological perspective between Calvinist Baptists and Arminian Baptists in early Rhode Island.
3. What were the "Six Principles" of the Six-Principle Baptists, and from what biblical text did they derive these principles?
4. Why was Brown University founded, and what does its early history reveal about the tensions within the Baptist community in Rhode Island?
5. What was the dominant religious tradition in New England, and what other denominations managed to establish a foothold there?
6. Explain the origins of the Dutch Reformed Church in the colony of New Netherlands (later New York) and a challenge they initially faced.
7. How did the English takeover of New Netherlands and its renaming to New York impact religious diversity in the colony?
8. What were William Penn's motivations for founding the colony of Pennsylvania, and what was the religious atmosphere he sought to create?
9. Describe the unique challenges faced by the Anglican Church in early Virginia due to the geography of the colony, and how were these challenges initially addressed?
10. What were the primary roles of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), founded by Thomas Bray?

### Quiz Answer Key:

1. Roger Williams was a strong advocate for religious freedom and established Rhode Island as a colony where diverse religious groups, including Baptists and Quakers, could practice their faiths without persecution, making it a center for



denominational variety. He briefly helped found the first Baptist church in America and aligned with the Arminian Baptists due to his emphasis on freedom.

2. The key difference revolved around the concept of free will versus predestination. Calvinist Baptists believed in predestination, asserting that God had already chosen who would be saved or lost, while Arminian Baptists emphasized the freedom of individuals to choose whether or not to accept God's grace.
3. The Six Principles were repentance, faith, baptism, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. They derived these principles from Hebrews chapter 6, verses 1 and 2, and considered them the foundational doctrines of Christianity.
4. Brown University was founded by Baptists who believed that the Baptists in Rhode Island were becoming theologically liberal and moving away from Calvinist doctrines. Its early history illustrates internal disagreements within the Baptist movement and efforts to maintain specific theological stances through education.
5. Congregationalism, formed by the unification of Puritans and Pilgrims, was the dominant religious tradition in New England. However, other groups such as Quakers, Baptists, and Anglicans eventually established themselves, though often facing initial resistance.
6. The Dutch Reformed Church originated with the Dutch settlers who established the New Netherlands as a trading colony and were predominantly Calvinist. A significant early challenge was the initial lack of ordained ministers, leaving lay people to manage religious life until the arrival of a preacher from Amsterdam.
7. The English takeover in 1664 led to greater religious tolerance in New York compared to the Dutch period under Peter Stuyvesant. While Anglicans were favored, the change opened the door for other groups like Quakers and Roman Catholics to settle and practice their faith more freely.
8. William Penn, a Quaker who had experienced religious persecution in England, founded Pennsylvania with the primary motivation of creating a haven for religious freedom and toleration. He envisioned a colony where individuals of all faiths could live without fear of state oppression.
9. The vast and scattered settlement patterns in early Virginia meant that Anglicans lacked consistent access to ordained priests, leading to the rise of lay vestries composed of laymen who assumed control over local parishes. This decentralized control became a point of concern for Anglican authorities.

10. The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) focused on building libraries and distributing books in the New World to promote Christian understanding, particularly from an Anglican perspective. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) supported missionary work, especially among Native Americans and those not affiliated with any denomination.

### **Essay Format Questions:**

1. Analyze the factors that contributed to the development of denominational diversity in the American colonies during the 17th and early 18th centuries. Consider the influence of key individuals, geographical differences, and religious tolerance (or intolerance) in various colonies.
2. Compare and contrast the approaches to religious freedom and the resulting denominational landscapes of Rhode Island and Pennsylvania. What made these two colonies distinct in their establishment and impact on religious pluralism in America?
3. Discuss the challenges faced by established denominations (such as Congregationalists in New England, Dutch Reformed in New York, and Anglicans in Virginia and Maryland) in maintaining their dominance and cohesion in the American colonial context.
4. Evaluate the significance of the early Baptist movement in the American colonies, focusing on its internal divisions, the development of associational structures, and its contributions to the broader landscape of religious diversity.
5. Examine the role of specific religious leaders and their actions in shaping the denominational character of individual colonies. Consider the impact of figures like Roger Williams, William Penn, Peter Stuyvesant, and James Blair.

## Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Denominationalism:** The existence of distinct religious groups or denominations within a broader religious tradition, each with its own specific beliefs, practices, and organizational structure.
- **Religious Liberty:** The freedom to practice one's religion or no religion without interference or persecution from the government or other authorities.
- **Predestination:** A theological doctrine, particularly associated with Calvinism, that God has eternally chosen who will be saved and who will be damned, independent of human merit or decision.
- **Free Will:** The capacity of individuals to make independent choices and act on their own volition, particularly in the context of religious belief and salvation.
- **Congregationalism:** A Protestant church governance system in which each local church is independent and self-governing, without hierarchical authority over individual congregations.
- **Reformed Theology:** A branch of Protestantism that emerged from the teachings of John Calvin and other reformers, emphasizing the sovereignty of God, the authority of Scripture, and salvation by grace through faith.
- **Quakers (Religious Society of Friends):** A Christian movement founded by George Fox, emphasizing direct personal experience of God, inner light, pacifism, and social justice.
- **Baptists:** Protestant denominations that emphasize believers' baptism (usually by immersion) and the autonomy of the local church.
- **Anglican Church (Church of England):** The established church of England, which is part of the broader Anglican Communion and retains elements of both Catholic and Protestant traditions.
- **Dutch Reformed Church:** A Reformed Protestant denomination originating in the Netherlands.
- **Presbyterianism:** A Protestant church governance system in which churches are governed by a system of elected elders (presbyters) organized into local, regional, and national bodies.

- **Lay Vestry:** A committee of lay members in an Anglican parish who were responsible for managing the temporal affairs of the church, and in early Virginia, held significant influence due to the scarcity of clergy.
- **Commissary:** An official appointed to exercise certain oversight or administrative functions on behalf of a higher authority, such as the Bishop of London's representative in the American colonies.
- **Sabbath:** The seventh day of the week (Saturday in Judaism and some Christian traditions), observed as a day of rest and worship according to the Ten Commandments.

## 5. FAQs Green, American Christianity, Session 4, Denominationalism in the American Colonies, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions: Denominationalism in the American Colonies

**1. What role did Rhode Island play in the development of religious diversity in the American colonies?** Rhode Island, under the influence of Roger Williams, became a crucial haven for religious dissenters. Williams, advocating for absolute religious freedom, established a colony where various religious groups, including Quakers and Baptists, could settle without the persecution they faced in other colonies like Massachusetts. This commitment to religious liberty fostered a unique environment of denominational pluralism early in American history, setting a precedent for other colonies to varying degrees.

**2. What were the key differences between Calvinist Baptists and Arminian Baptists in colonial Rhode Island, and what was the significance of the Arminian Baptists also being known as Six-Principle Baptists?** The primary theological difference revolved around the concept of free will. Calvinist Baptists adhered to predestination, believing God had already chosen who would be saved. Arminian Baptists, following Jacob Arminius, emphasized the freedom of individuals to choose or reject God. Roger Williams, a proponent of freedom in all aspects of life, aligned himself with the Arminian Baptists. They adopted the name Six-Principle Baptists based on their interpretation of Hebrews 6:1-2, which they considered the foundational principles of Christianity: repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. This demonstrated their attempt to ground their theological distinctives in scripture and further differentiated them as a specific Baptist denomination.

**3. How did the founding of Brown University reflect the internal dynamics within the Baptist movement in early America?** Brown University was founded by Baptists in 1764 in Warren, Rhode Island (later moved to Providence), primarily to train Baptist preachers. However, a significant underlying motivation was the concern among some Calvinist-leaning Baptists that the existing Baptist population in Rhode Island was becoming theologically liberal and straying from core Calvinist doctrines. Thus, the university aimed to revitalize and reinforce a particular theological stance within the broader Baptist community, illustrating the early development of distinct theological camps and the efforts to preserve specific interpretations of Baptist beliefs.

**4. How did the Dutch Reformed Church become established in New York (originally New Netherlands), and what challenges did it initially face?**

New York was initially founded as the Dutch colony of New Netherlands, primarily as a trading venture. The Dutch settlers who came were predominantly from the Dutch Reformed Church, which followed a Calvinist theological orientation. A key initial challenge was the lack of ordained ministers. The Dutch Reformed tradition placed a high value on ordination, so for the early years, the church was largely led by laypeople who could conduct some religious activities but not administer sacraments or fully lead congregations. The arrival of the first ordained minister from Amsterdam in 1628 was a pivotal moment for formally establishing the Dutch Reformed Church in the colony.

**5. What were Peter Stuyvesant's views on religious diversity in New Netherlands, and how did the English takeover in 1664 impact the religious landscape of the colony?**

As the Dutch Reformed governor of New Netherlands, Peter Stuyvesant favored the Dutch Reformed Church and sought to make it the dominant religious institution. He exhibited intolerance towards dissenting groups, particularly the Quakers, who faced oppression under his rule. The English takeover in 1664, which led to the renaming of the colony to New York, brought about a growing tolerance for religious liberty, consistent with developments in some other colonies. This shift opened the door for various other religious groups, including Anglicans, Quakers, and a small number of Roman Catholics, to settle and establish themselves in New York, diversifying its religious landscape.

**6. How did William Penn's personal religious convictions as a Quaker shape the founding and development of Pennsylvania?**

William Penn, a wealthy English aristocrat who converted to Quakerism, founded Pennsylvania in 1681 as a direct result of his Quaker beliefs and his desire to create a haven for religious freedom. Having experienced persecution as a Quaker, Penn was deeply committed to religious toleration and liberty. He established Pennsylvania with the explicit intention of allowing people of all faiths to practice freely. This attracted a diverse influx of European immigrants seeking religious freedom, including German Lutherans and various other denominations, making Pennsylvania a unique colony known for its religious variety.

**7. What were the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the Anglican Church in Maryland, and what was the significance of figures like Thomas Bray?**

While Maryland was founded by the Roman Catholic Lord Baltimore as a place of religious toleration, including for Catholics facing persecution in England, Anglicans formed a majority of the early settlers. Over time, the Church of England (Anglican Church) became established as the state church of Maryland through the efforts of figures like Thomas Bray, who served as the commissary (overseer) appointed by the Bishop of London. Bray was instrumental in establishing the Anglican presence by founding organizations like the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) to build libraries and promote Christian understanding, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) to support missionary work. Although the Anglican Church became the official church, Maryland remained relatively open to other religious groups.

**8. What were some of the key characteristics of religious life in the American colonies by the beginning of the colonial period, and what major trends were emerging?**

By the beginning of the colonial period, several key characteristics of religious life were evident. Firstly, there was significant religious diversity across the colonies, with various denominations establishing themselves. Secondly, no single denomination held dominant status throughout all the colonies, unlike the situation in many parts of Europe. Thirdly, the initial churches were primarily transplanted from Europe, with denominations like Congregationalism, Dutch Reformed, and Anglicanism having their roots in European religious movements. A significant trend was the greater freedom and liberty these transplanted denominations experienced in America compared to Europe, allowing for independent development. However, many established churches also began to face challenges in maintaining membership and allegiance over time, setting the stage for future religious developments and revivals on American soil.