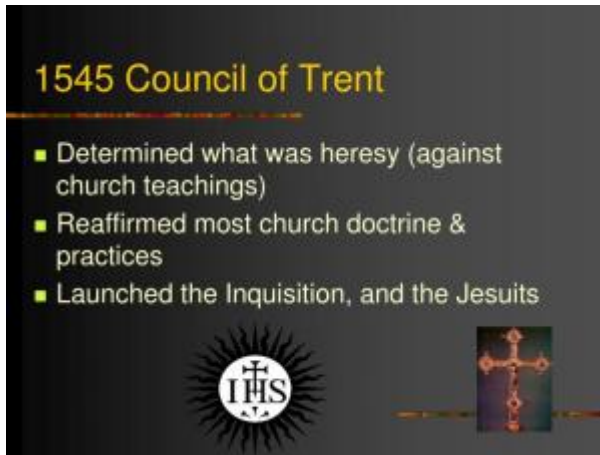


# Catholicism and Arminianism in England and France During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries



This is the next chapter of the book, [The Foundations Under Attack: The Roots of Apostasy – By Michael de Semlyen](#)

## Chapter 12

### **Catholicism and Arminianism in England and France During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries**

The sixteenth-century Council of Trent was convened on December 13, 1545, ostensibly to discuss the reformation of the Roman Catholic Church. This was merely a subterfuge or, in up-to-date language, “spin.” In reality, *the purpose was to exonerate the Church from its widespread identification as the Antichrist of Scripture and to attack and condemn the doctrines of the Reformation*, particularly the doctrines of Free and Sovereign Grace. It declared these to be “anathema.” Unlike the other Councils and Synods we have considered in this section, the decrees of this “ecumenical council” have no validity whatsoever for saints of God, for Trent was an instrument of the Papacy to counter the Reformation. It was set up “hot on the heels” of the Roman Church’s Inquisition, which was instituted by Pope Paul III in 1542 to combat Protestantism.

Looking again at Trent, its decrees, and dogmas, we can demonstrate to Arminians that they can find their cherished semi-Pelagian views on *free will* enshrined in the decrees of this notorious council. Whilst Trent officially condemned the teachings of Pelagius, it succeeded in tacitly restating them, employing the “ingenious disingenuousness” and theological double talk which has been the hallmark of the Jesuit Order. The same equivocation and prevarication displayed by Pelagius and Arminius were to be found in abundance in this Council.

From start to finish it was characterised by corruption, bribery, deceit, and duplicity. Even its claim to be called “Ecumenical Council” was misleading. The Jesuits had seen to it that it was packed with placemen (agents) and

cronies (closely resembling the First Vatican Council in 1870, which voted through Papal infallibility). The vast majority of bishops in attendance were Italians, many of them from a diocese especially created by the Pope so that they would represent his views and ensure that he would get his way, which of course he did.

The canons of the Council of Trent are still binding on all Catholics to this day and are part of the *Dogma* of the Church of Rome. They oppose the core beliefs of the Reformation on free grace and justification and stress that salvation is impossible without adherence to these canons. They proclaim the Arminian view, *free will* being exalted over the Sovereign Grace of God. It is perhaps worth taking note of the irony that many who subscribe to these Tridentine views assert that "Calvinism" has its roots in Romanism, when their own Arminian soteriology was so firmly affirmed at this notorious council of the ancient enemy of the saints of God.

We make reference to Trent for another reason. It proved to be a watershed in the rapid ascendancy of Arminianism to its place of prominence in the church of our day. We shall see how both Roman Catholic monarchs and Anglo-Catholic Arminian prelates took the Canons of Trent as a licence to disenfranchise, persecute, torture, and murder the true saints of God after the manner of the Papal Inquisition.

### **The Council of Trent**

The infamous Council of Trent had been in session for some eight years when Mary Tudor ascended the Throne of England in 1553. In the words of Wetzel, "Bloody Queen Mary made England Catholic again." The year after her coronation she married Philip II of Spain and very quickly the Catholic persecution of Protestants began, decreed by the Council of Trent and carried out by the Inquisition.

"In reference to the Calvinistic doctrines—the doctrines of free and sovereign grace held by the Reformers in England, Toplady observes, 'Queen Mary and her Spanish husband well knew that Calvinism is the very life and soul of the Reformation; and that Popery would never flourish till the Calvinistic doctrines were eradicated.' Her efforts to destroy by sword and faggot those who upheld the Truth earned for her the unenviable appellation of 'Bloody Mary.' The charge on which many of them were burnt at the stake was that they held to the doctrine of predestination and rejected the Arminian and Popish doctrine of free-will."

Yet, as J.C. Ryle reminded us late in the nineteenth century,

"A very popular history of our English Queens hardly mentions the martyrdoms of Queen Mary's days! Yet Mary was not called 'Bloody Mary' without reason, and scores of Protestants were burned in her reign. It is... as certain that the Romish Church burned our Reformers as it is that William the Conqueror won the Battle of Hastings."

Mary Tudor so detested *free grace* that "... life alone was wanting to her to have completely overthrown the Reformation in England and to have placed

again the kingdom beneath the Romish yoke." During the short reign of "Bloody Mary," John Rogers (translator of the Matthew Bible), Bishops Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, and two hundred eighty-one other men and women were martyred.

In the seventeenth century, during the reigns of the four Stuart Kings— James I, Charles I, Charles II and James II—Arminianism grew to become the prevalent faith of the Church of England and made considerable progress in Scotland, too.

James I, although himself a Calvinist in soteriology, with a robustly Calvinist archbishop of Canterbury, George Abbot, favoured "High Churchmen" who accepted his doctrine of "the divine right of kings." They tended to be Arminian in sympathy.

William Laud, who later became archbishop of Canterbury under Charles I, was one of them. Led by Laud, and greatly disliking Puritans, "...Charles promoted many Arminians as Prelates. ... Absolute personal predestination had come to be thought of as a distinctly Puritan assertion, and, when, after 1660 the Restoration set the pendulum swinging against all that Puritanism had stood for, Calvinism had the status of an oddity maintained by nonconformists. Anglican theologians with few exceptions were Arminian in type, as indeed they are still."

In the twenty years from Laud's being made a bishop in 1621 until his imprisonment in the Tower of London in 1640, he wreaked, almost single-handedly, more havoc and destruction on our nation and on the cause of God's Truth than any other individual professing Christian in our history. Even from 1602, while he was still at university, "Laud became a marked man and known as a very lukewarm Protestant, if not a friend of Popery, and an open enemy of the pure Gospel of Christ..."

...In 1622, before he had been a Bishop for a year,... [he] ...ordered, that no one, under the degree of a Bishop or a Dean, shall 'preach on such deep points as predestination, or election, or the universal efficacy, resistibility, or irresistibility of God's grace.'"

In 1623, when Charles I ascended the throne and married Henrietta, a zealous Papist, Laud, by now Bishop of London, encouraged them to oppress the Puritans and their true gospel of free grace. "It really came to this, that men said you might lie or swear or get drunk, and little notice would be taken; but to be a Puritan or a Nonconformist, was to commit the unpardonable sin." In 1633, by means of political manipulation and Jesuitical intrigue, Laud became Archbishop of Canterbury. He had assumed for his party and himself unquestionable powers (in the style of the Papacy), which undermined even the authority of the King. "Laud obtained an undivided ascendancy over Charles I, prohibited doctrinal controversy respecting Arminian tenets, and commanded the suppression of afternoon lectures, which were generally conducted by Puritan divines."

The character of Laud may be seen in relation to his part in the trial, sentencing, imprisonment, and torturing by the notorious Star Chamber of Dr.

Alexander Leighton in London. Leighton, a courageous and plainspoken Scotsman, declared that both king and Anglican state-church were "under the laws from the Scripture." Later he described Arminianism as "The Pope's Benjamin, the last and greatest monster of the man of sin; the elixir of Anti-Christianism; the mystery of the mystery of iniquity; the Pope's cabinet; the very quintessence of equivocation."

"A sketch of Leighton's history is given in the preface to a letter which Samuel Rutherford wrote to him while in prison. The sketch says that Leighton, because of his zeal for Presbyterian (Calvinistic) principles and against the innovations of Laud, was arrested in 1629 and kept in an abominable cell sixteen weeks before his trial by the Star Chamber. Because of his severe distress that had brought skin and hair almost wholly off his body, he could not attend his trial. The Star Chamber condemned the afflicted and aged divine to be degraded as a minister, to have one of his ears cut off and one side of his nose slit, to be branded on the face with a red-hot iron, to stand in the pillory, to be whipped at a post, to pay a fine of £1000, and to suffer imprisonment until the fine was paid. When this inhuman sentence was pronounced, Laud took off his hat. and holding up his hands, gave thanks to God who had given the Church victory over her enemies! The sentence was executed without mercy, and Leighton lay in prison till upwards of ten years. When liberated he could hardly walk, see, or hear. He died in 1649.

"Three other brave Puritans—Burton, Bastwick and Prynne— each of whom spoke openly of his own resolution to follow the Bible only, suffered similar cruelties. Henry Burton (1578-1648) was one of the Puritan divines whose fate was intimately bound up with that of Laud. On April 23. 1625, shortly after Charles 1 acceded to the throne. Burton wrote to the King complaining that both Laud and Richard Neile (Archbishop of York) harboured Catholic sympathies. This threw him out of favour with all concerned, and was the first step in a chain of events which led to Burton's imprisonment, together with William Prynne (1600-1669), who confronted Laud's Arminianism, and John Bastwick (1593-1654). All three men were condemned in 1636 to have their ears chopped off and to be imprisoned for life, together with sundry fines and other penalties. Prynne's ears were only partially lopped, but he suffered the additional indignity of being branded on the cheeks with the letters "S.L" ("seditious libeler"), and great numbers were reduced to entire destitution, because they dared to write against Laud's popish ceremonies."

The most godly men were ruthlessly persecuted, many having to flee the country and take refuge in Europe and the American colonies. The patience of a largely God-fearing nation finally was exhausted, and the people rebelled. This precipitated the English Civil War.

In the events preceding this national disaster, Laud was impeached on November 3, 1640. A few days earlier, the Earl of Strafford who was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and a Papist was also impeached. It was discovered that the two had been in league for twelve years. Papers seized demonstrated that these men were indeed administrators of the "Sovereign Drug Arminianism" and were prepared to go to any lengths in pursuit of their goals. Though Laud and Strafford were incarcerated in the Tower, their confederates continued to plot to capture London and Parliament itself. This plot was revealed to the

Commons on May 2, 1641, by Mr. John Pym. The conspirators absconded and the usual mendacity of the captive Arminians began. However, in the same year, "Arminianism was officially condemned by the House of Commons."

On June 12, 1643, Parliament issued an order for an assembly of Puritan divines, chaired by William Twisse, to meet at Westminster to redefine the creed and doctrine of the Church of England. This Westminster Assembly completed its work in 1646 and "affirmed a strong Calvinistic position and disavowed the errors of Arminianism, Roman Catholicism and sectarianism."

Of Laud and his confederates, the evangelical Bishop J.C. Ryle stated, "Had half the zeal he displayed in snubbing Calvinists, persecuting Puritans, promoting Arminians, and making advances towards Rome been shown by...[Anglican divines]...in propagating Evangelical religion, it would have been a great blessing to the Church of England." To which we add, to all the Church in England. But God was and is Sovereign in all of human history.

After the Civil War (1642-1651), the monarchy was restored, and Charles II, son of Charles I and his French Queen Henrietta Maria, ascended the throne of England. Like his father, Charles II was married to a Roman Catholic, Catherine of Braganza. The Jesuit and Arminian influence was restored to the Court of the Monarch.

James II, brother of Charles II, succeeded him and attempted to re-establish the Church of Rome in England. He promoted Catholics to high office and put seven leading bishops on trial for refusing to allow his declarations to be read out in all the churches. His actions stirred up longstanding public fears of a return of Popery.

The Protestant opposition, represented by seven prominent noblemen, was emboldened to invite William of Orange to assume the crown and his wife, James' elder daughter, to become Queen Mary II. Thus, by the grace of God, began the Glorious (and bloodless) Revolution of 1688 in England and Scotland. The Bill of Rights was enacted the following year, restoring Parliament's proper powers and securing the Protestant Throne and the Reformed religion established by Law.

## **Persecutions in France**

At that same time, in the late seventeenth century, the experience of Christians in France was very different. *The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes* in 1685 led to the martyrdom of many members of the French Reformed Church. As the nineteenth-century American historian John Dowling records, "King Louis XIV of France, a bigoted papist, at the persuasions of La Chaise, his Jesuit confessor, publicly revoked that protecting edict, and thus let loose the floodgates of popish cruelty upon the defenceless protestants. In the cruelties that followed, the policy of Rome appeared to be changed. She had tried, in innumerable instances, the effect of persecution unto death, and the results of the St Bartholomew's Massacre had shown that it was not effectual in eradicating the heresy. Now her plan was by torture, annoyance, and inductions of various kinds suggested by a brutal ingenuity, 'to wear out the saints of the Most High.'"

Engravings of Papal Medals struck in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries by triumphant “Vicars of Christ” illustrate the malevolent spirit masquerading as the “Holy Spirit” which persecuted the French Protestant Huguenots.



Special commemorative medal struck by Pope Gregory XIII (1572-85)

The medal by Pope Gregory XIII was to commemorate the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre on August 24th of 1572 – The horrendous slaughter of men, women, and children of over 100,000 people including over 50,000 in Paris alone. The reason: religious intolerance of the French Protestants involved in the Reformation. What did Pope Gregory XIII – the Vicar of Christ on Earth – think about such merciless killing? He praised Catherine de Medici (the instigator) and commissioned a medal to be cast in honor of the event, with the inscription “Slaughter [strages] of the Huguenots.”

“When news of the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre reached the Vatican there was jubilation! Cannons roared–bells rung– and a special commemorative medal was struck–to honor the occasion! The Pope commissioned Italian artist Vasari to paint a mural of the Massacre–which still hangs in the Vatican!”

Henry IV adopted the Roman Catholic faith, but issued the Edict of Nantes (1598), which both recognised Catholicism as the official religion and gave the Huguenots certain rights, such as freedom of worship. Under Louis XIV, the clergy regained its influence, and the Huguenots were again persecuted. A medal was struck to commemorate the massacre of the Huguenots in the Cevennes, one of the persecutions directed by Louis XIV against Protestants during this period. This wave of persecutions eventually led finally to the total revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, which destroyed the civil and religious liberties of the Huguenots.



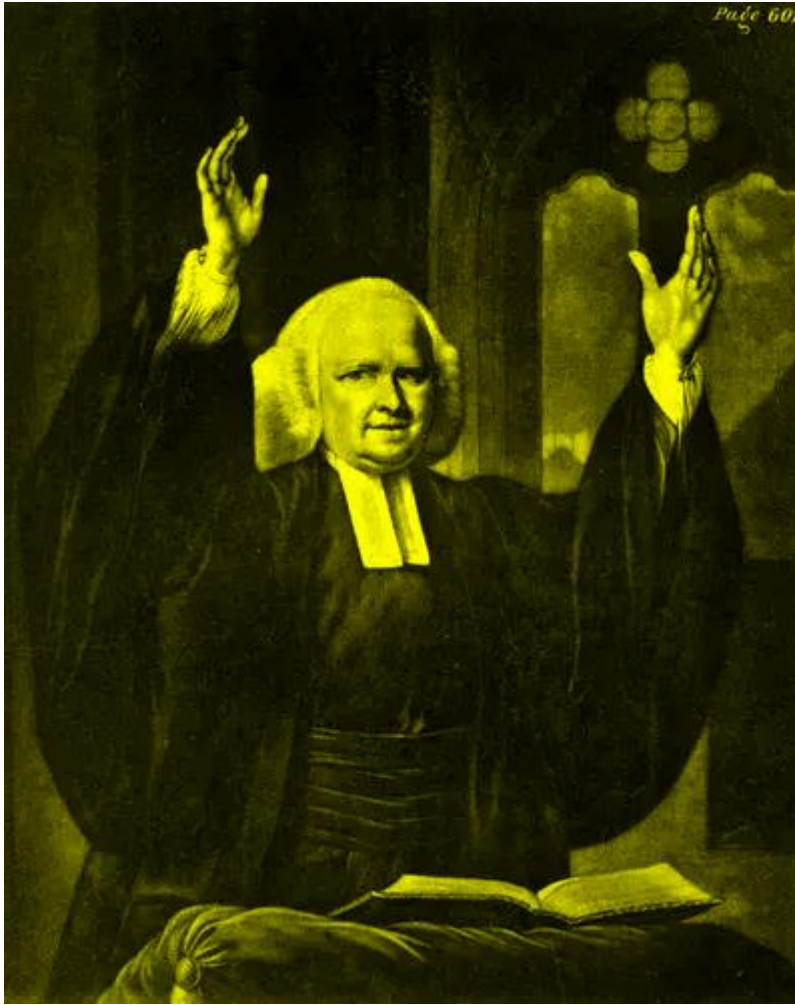
This medal, executed in Rome by the Italian medallist Giovanni Hamerani (1673), commemorated the massacre of the Huguenots in the Cevennes, one of the persecutions directed by Louis XIV against the Protestants during this period. It appears to celebrate rather than criticise this massacre, with Religion guiding the slaughter.

These engravings of Popish medals, triumphantly glorying in massacre and slaughter, reveal that Antichrist spirit which deserves the thoughtful (and prayerful) attention of all who profess faith in Christ; especially in this age where “evangelicals” are seeking reunification with the Church of Rome. The discerning reader will note that the acclaimed victory of the Antichrist Papacy was over Calvinism or the doctrines of Free & Sovereign Grace. So-called Arminian Protestants have never been a threat to the Papacy. She has no cause to fear her own spiritual offspring. When a Pope strikes a medal celebrating “Arminianism Overthrown,” we might have reason to believe that the Leopard has changed its spots; but that shall never happen. The “house divided against itself shall not stand.” – Matthew 12:25

### **Whitefield and Wesley**

The eighteenth-century Evangelical revival in England, “the Great Awakening,” was led by George Whitefield, a Calvinist, and by John Wesley, an Arminian. Although they were able to cooperate with each other publicly in apparent harmony, controversy and doctrinal conflict were inevitable for they were not preaching the same gospel. In 1739, Whitefield invited Wesley to share with him the spectacular open-air ministry that he had established in Bristol, London, and in Gloucester and, in 1739, asked him to take charge of it while he was in America. On his return from evangelising New England, Whitefield returned to Bristol and discovered that all was not well. In his splendid biography of Whitefield, Arnold Dallimore records the great evangelist’s reaction to what he found:

“Sad tares have been sown here,” he wrote. “It will require some time to pluck them up. The doctrines of the gospel are sadly run down, and most monstrous errors propagated.”



George Whitefield

By *sad tares* and *monstrous errors* Whitefield was referring not only to the Wesleys' "dressing up the doctrine of Election in such horrible colours," but also the "Perfection" teaching which had become particularly prevalent at Bristol. During his former ministry in England, Whitefield had taken it for granted that by *Perfection* Wesley did not mean anything more than a high state of Christian maturity. But, while in America, he had learnt that Wesley was teaching his hearers that they could actually come into a condition of entire sinlessness. Whitefield heard people assert that they had reached this condition, and one of Wesley's close friends in Bristol, Edward Nowers, was particularly zealous in this assertion. Whitefield wrote:

"Brother N[owers] tells me that, for three months past, he has not sinned in thought, word or deed. He says he is not only free from the power but from the very in-being of sin. He now asserts it is impossible for him to sin."

The following year Whitefield wrote Wesley a letter as a response to his sermon entitled "Free Grace." The letter, dated December 24, 1740, included the following extracts:

"From some time before and especially since my last departure from England, both in public and private, by preaching and printing, you have been propagating the doctrine of *universal redemption*. And when I remember how



Paul reproved Peter for his dissimulation, I fear I have been sinfully silent for too long. O then be not angry with me, dear and honoured Sir, if now I deliver my soul, by telling you, that I think in this you greatly err....I shall only make a few remarks upon your sermon, entitled 'Free Grace.'..... Honoured Sir, how could it enter into your heart, to chase a text to disprove the doctrine of election, out of the 8<sup>th</sup> of Romans, where this doctrine is so plainly asserted..... Indeed, honoured Sir, it is plain beyond all contradiction, that St Paul, through the whole 8th of the Romans, is speaking of the privileges of those only who are really in Christ. And let any unprejudiced person read what goes before, and what follows your text, and he must confess 'all' only signified those that are in Christ. Had anyone a mind to prove the doctrine of *election* as well as of *final perseverance*, he could hardly wish for a text more fit for his purpose, than that which you have chosen to disprove it. After the first paragraph, I scarce know whether you mentioned it so much as once, through your whole sermon. But your discourse, in my opinion, is as little to the purpose as your text, and instead of warping, does more and more confirm me in the belief of the doctrine of God's *eternal election*. I shall not mention how illogically you have proceeded...

"Without the belief of the doctrine of election, and the immutability of the free love of God, I cannot see how it is possible that any should have a comfortable assurance of God's eternal salvation.....If I must speak freely, I believe your fighting so strenuously against the doctrine of election, and pleading so vehemently for a sinless perfection, are among the reasons or culpable causes why you are kept out of the liberties of the gospel, and from that full assurance of faith that they enjoy, who have experimentally tasted and daily feed upon God's electing, everlasting love. The doctrine of universal redemption, as you set it forth, is really the highest reproach upon the dignity of the Son of God and the merit of His blood. "Consider whether it be not rather blasphemy to say as you do, 'Christ not only died for those that are saved, but also those that perish.'"

A misleading, hagiographic image of John Wesley has filtered down to us, which is widespread in today's Evangelical circles. Harold Vinson Synan, an Arminian and Pentecostal historian, has given this appraisal of Wesley and the age in which he lived.

"In arriving at his mature theological convictions, Wesley borrowed from many sources. His doctrines were distilled primarily from the *Anglo-Catholic* tradition in which he was educated, rather than from the continental Reformed Protestant tradition. Methodism, with its *strong Arminian* base, was in essence a reaction against the uncompromising Calvinism, which had dominated English social, religious, and political life during much of the 17th century. If the Calvinists taught that only the elect could be saved, the Methodist taught that anyone could find salvation. If the Calvinist could never be certain that he was in the elect circle, [a misrepresentation] (author's note) the Methodist could know from a crisis experience of conversion that he was saved. From the beginning, Methodist theology placed great emphasis on this conscious religious experience. This empirical evidence of salvation is what Wesley and his followers have since offered to the world".



John Wesley

Synan's sympathetic appraisal portrays Arminianism in a favourable light, but, as a Canadian publication of fifty years ago continues to warn us, "Let us not think that the malignant spirit of persecution that moved the Arminians—led by Scottish Bishop Thomas Sydserff, Archbishop Laud, and others—died at the end of the Covenanting Struggles of long ago. The Arminians of today hold precisely the same false doctrines, and are just as relentlessly opposed to the absolute sovereignty of God and to unconditional election as were the Arminians of old."

Continued in [Charles Finney, D.L.Moody, and a Man-Centered Gospel](#)

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