

A. The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century by Roland H. Bainton (127 pages)

As part of my review for the mid-term exam I read the first six chapters of this book. Bainton presents the Reformers as genuine human beings as he wrote about their personal problems and private struggles as well as their public successes. Luther is described as a man who was motivated by deep religious convictions that constrained him to find peace with God and to correct the abuses he saw in the Roman Catholic Church which might keep other people from realizing their own salvation. That was why Luther protested so strongly against indulgences - they would tend to produce complacency rather than contrition in the hearts of the people. With regard to Luther's thinking on this issue Bainton writes, "The sinner who is primarily concerned to escape penalties is hopeless." (page 40) The response by the pope to Luther's Ninety-five Theses was a clarification of the Roman Catholic Church's teachings on the issues in question. Although this clarification brought the repudiation of some of Luther's charges of abuse, it also brought the rest of the abuses more visibly out into the open. This did not placate Luther but rather it fueled his zeal for challenging what he considered to be erroneous. He proceeded to proclaim even more loudly the fallibility of both popes and councils. From his insistence on the Word of God as the ultimate authority comes one of the hallmarks of Protestantism. Other developments in Luther's doctrines are also described as they grew out of conflicts with both other Reformers as well as with the pope and other Roman Catholics.

The next three chapters that I read dealt with the other veins of the Reformation but with less emphasis on the other Reformers than had been done with Luther. The emphasis was on the differences between the doctrines held by the different Reformers (Zwingli in German Switzerland, the Anabaptist, and Calvin in Geneva) and the conflicts that resulted. My knowledge and understanding of these issues were thoroughly tested during the mid-term exam!

B. *Arminius* by Carl Bangs (125 pages)

As the book is 360 pages long I am only now getting to the "good stuff" where his first conflicts with Calvinism (1591) begin to be described. The Dutch Reformed minister, Jacobus Arminius, was born about 1559 (about 13 years after the death of Luther [1546] and about five years before the death of Calvin [1564]) in Oudewater, Holand. Although Arminius did not write much about his early years it is important to know all that can be discovered about the influences on his thinking. Arminius' father died while Arminius was very young (perhaps while he was still in his mother's womb). In 1572 Arminius began his studies at Utrecht. In the same year his hometown had gone over to the side of Protestantism and national independence from Spain. In 1575 Rudolphus Snellius took Arminius with him to Marburg. It was through Snellius that Arminius probably became interested in the philosophy and logic of Ramus. In 1578 Spanish forces re-took Oudewater by a massacre in which Arminius' mother, siblings, and other relatives were killed. In 1576 he enrolled in the University of Leiden. In 1581 the burgomasters and clergy of Amsterdam took on Arminius' financial support and sent him to Geneva in 1582 to continue his studies under Theodore Beza. In 1587 he began his pastoral duties in Amsterdam.