

Glossary of Theological Terms*

Anglicanism: The English (Anglican) Episcopal church established in the sixteenth century when Henry VIII broke from the Roman Catholic church in order to be granted a divorce from Katherine of Aragon.

Arminianism: The religious doctrines of the Dutch theologian Arminius which opposed strict Calvinist theology, especially in matters of predestination. It emphasized that God predestined the good to salvation and the bad to damnation, but did not ordain that one group should be good and one evil. Man was seen as having free will.

Calvinism: The religious doctrines of John Calvin, emphasizing the omnipotence of God and the salvation of the elect by God's grace alone. Calvinists believed in predestination.

Catholicism: The official church of Rome. Doctrine in which the church and tradition have authority in religious matters. Salvation can be achieved through good works and religious practices. Churchmen (i.e. priests) act as the mediator between man and God and can determine what an individual must believe and do. The *Protestants* associated corruption, ostentation, and idolatry with the Catholic Church.

Independents: Unlike the *Presbyterians*, the Independents, denied the need for an established church and demanded religious toleration. Independents made up most of Cromwell's New Model Army and, fighting against a mostly Presbyterian Parliament, they defeated the Presbyterian army and took control of Parliament in 1648. Became modern Congregationalists.

Presbetyrianism: Modeled on Calvinist theology. Seen as more democratic for the clergy because there were no Bishops; they felt that the Episcopal church government ought to be replaced by that of a council of Presbetyrs, or Elders, on the local and national level. The Presbyterians sided in the civil war with the Royalists after Charles I agreed to support their cause. They advocated a no tolerance policy for dissenters.

Protestant: A member of a Western Christian church whose faith and practice are founded on the principles of the Protestant Reformation. Protestants believed in the acceptance of the Scriptures as the sole source of church authority, in salvation only through God's grace and personal faith, and in the universal priesthood of all the believers.

Puritan: A member of a group of English Protestants who in the 16th and 17th centuries dissented from the *Anglican* church because they felt that the church had not done enough to disassociate itself from the Roman *Catholic* Church. They advocated strict religious discipline along with simplification of the ceremonies and creeds of the Church of England. Puritans practiced modesty in dress, speech, and social habits.

*This is a boiled down version of some theological doctrines and is not meant to stand in for thorough definitions of all theology.

Definitions adapted from: Lois Potter, *A Preface to Milton* (New York: Longman, 1971). and *The Oxford English Dictionary*

Milton's theology

Milton was the grandson of a Catholic and the son of an Anglican; though he was destined for the church, Laud's disciplinary measures made him a Puritan. In 1640 he was Presbyterian in his sympathies . . . Relying on scripture and trying to discredit his opponents' use of early church history, Milton urged the abolition of bishops and the substitution of presbyters; he argued that until this was done the Reformation in England would not be complete . . . But though he was defending the official Presbyterian position, his future break with Prebyterianism was implied in his hostility not simply to bishops but to all hired priests.

The break came (although Milton never officially acknowledged it) as a result of attacks on his divorce pamphlets. Parliamnets printing ordinance seemed a revival of Laudian censorship, and Milton immediately joined the toleration controversy. Religious liberty now became his overriding interest. In *Areopagitica* (1644) he argued that the liscencing of the press inhibits the spread of Christian truth; the proliferation of sects, which the Presbyterians regarded with horror, seemed to Milton a sign of health, an essential means of testing truth. He moved into attack on the Presbyterian clergy for their support of the king . . .

Milton lost all interest in external church reform in the 1650's and hoped instead for complete disestablishment; he envisaged ministers being elected and vountarily supported by their congregations. . . (Rivers 310-11)

From: Isabel River, "Political and Religious Issues in the Time of Milton," Paradise Lost, ed. Scott Elledge (New York: Norton, 1993) 307-313.