

# History Seminar: Protestant Denominations

## Session No. 2: The Presbyterians

### Presbyterian History: *Where Did They Come From?*

- **Soil:** Originates in Geneva with John Calvin (1509-1564).
  - Further Reformed **Church Government:** *Presbyterian* (from the Greek *presbuteros*, “elder.”)
  - Further Reformed **Theology:** *Calvinism (Reformed Theology)*
- **Roots:** Develops in Scotland with John Knox (1514-1572)
  - Brought **Protestant Reformation** to Catholic Scotland
  - Brought **Calvin’s Reforms** to the new Church of Scotland.



- **Shoots:** Develops in England with the *Westminster Standards* (1643-1649).
  - Calvin and Knox's Reforms Led to the **English Civil War** (1642-1651).
  - Parliament Reformed Church of England with **Westminster Assembly's Westminster Standards** (1643-1653).
- **Fruits:** Spreads to North America and Subdivides Due to Controversies (1706-Present).
  - Subdivided Over **Revivalism:** Old Side vs. New Side Presbyterianism
  - Subdivided Over **Slavery:** Presbyterian Church, US (PCUS) vs United Presbyterian Church, USA (UPCUSA)
  - Subdivided Over **Liberalism:** Presbyterian Church, USA (PCUSA) vs. Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) and Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

## Presbyterian Theology: *What Do They Believe?*

- **Westminster Confession of Faith:** Puritan Confession of Faith Originally Drafted for Church of England. Later Adopted by Church of Scotland and Many Presbyterian Churches. Influenced Similar Confessions of Faith for Baptist and Congregationalists.
- **Westminster Shorter and Longer Catechisms:** Doctrinal Questions and Answers for the Purpose of Memorization.
- **Directory of Public Worship:** Sometimes called the *Westminster Directory*, it is a liturgical handbook designed to replace the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer*.
- **Form of Church Government:** Outlines Presbyterian Church Polity



## Presbyterian Distinctives: *What Distinguishes Them?*

- **How They Govern:** *Presbyterian Polity*
  - **Session:** Local Church Leadership Consisting of Ruling and Teaching Elders
  - **Presbytery:** Regional Gathering of Local Church Sessions
  - **Synod:** Regional Gathering of Presbyteries. Typically Convenes for Disciplinary Purposes.
  - **General Assembly:** National Gathering of Denomination
- **Who Can Pastor:** *Education Requirements for Ordination*
- **Who Should Be Baptized:** *Infant Baptism*
- **How To Interpret the Bible:** *Covenant Theology*
- **How God Saves:** *Sovereignty of God in Salvation*