

Decoding the Theological Family Tree

Why All Reformed Are Calvinist, But Not All Calvinists Are Reformed.



Wait, aren't these the same thing?

The Great Theological Misnomer



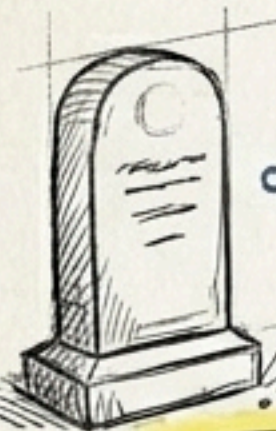
~~TULIP
Calvinist~~

- **Fact 1:** John Calvin never heard of the TULIP acronym.

- **Fact 2:** He hated the term Calvinist. When opponents coined it in the 1550s to mock his followers, Calvin rejected it as divisive, arguing it took glory away from God.

The story actually begins 1,100 years earlier in North Africa...

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants



400 AD (Augustine) –
Formulates core doctrines of
grace against Pelagius.

For a millennium, Augustine's
gospel of grace was buried under
a medieval spiritual economy of
indulgences and purgatory.

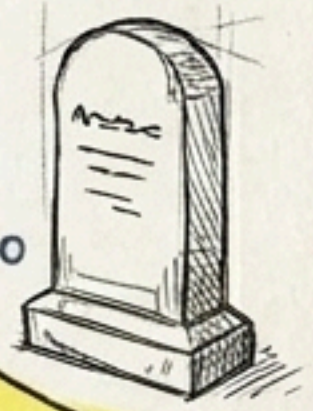


1517 (Luther) –
Ignites the Reformation
by rediscovering
justification by faith.



1536 (Calvin) – Publishes
Institutes (expanding from
a 516-page pocketbook to a
1,500+ page manual).

1619 (Synod of Dort) –
The theology is codified
internationally.

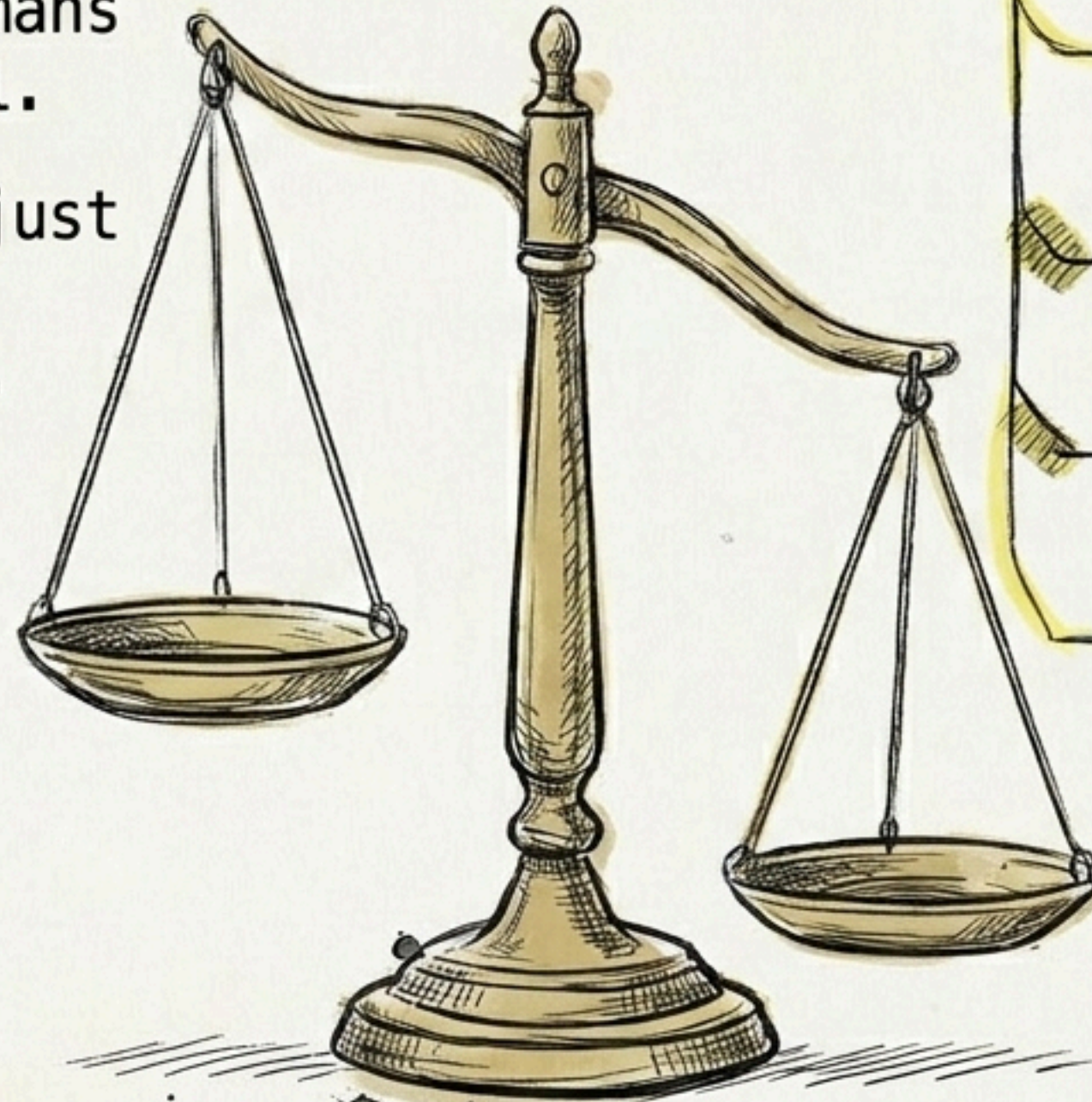


The Foundation: Augustine vs. Pelagius (400 AD)

Pelagius (British Monk)

Blank Slate: Humans are born neutral.

Effort: Sin is just bad choices; we can earn heaven.



Augustine (North African Bishop)

Corrupted Nature: Born slaves to sin (Original Sin).

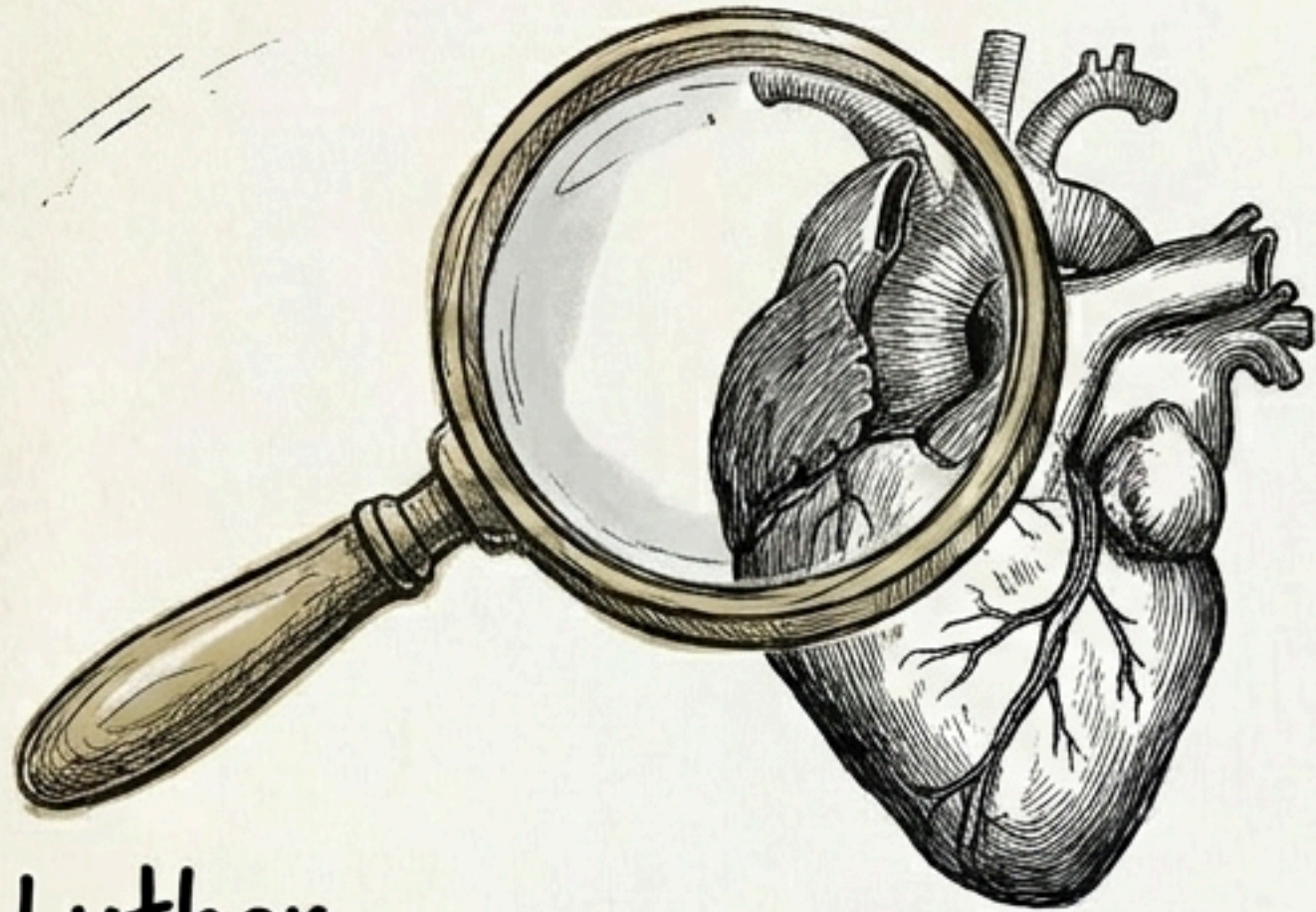
Grace First: Spiritually dead people can't choose God.

Predestination: God chooses beforehand.

Perseverance: God's grace is effectual.

Official Doctrine:
Council of Carthage (418 AD)
declared Pelagius a heretic.

The Reformers' Scope: Luther vs. Calvin



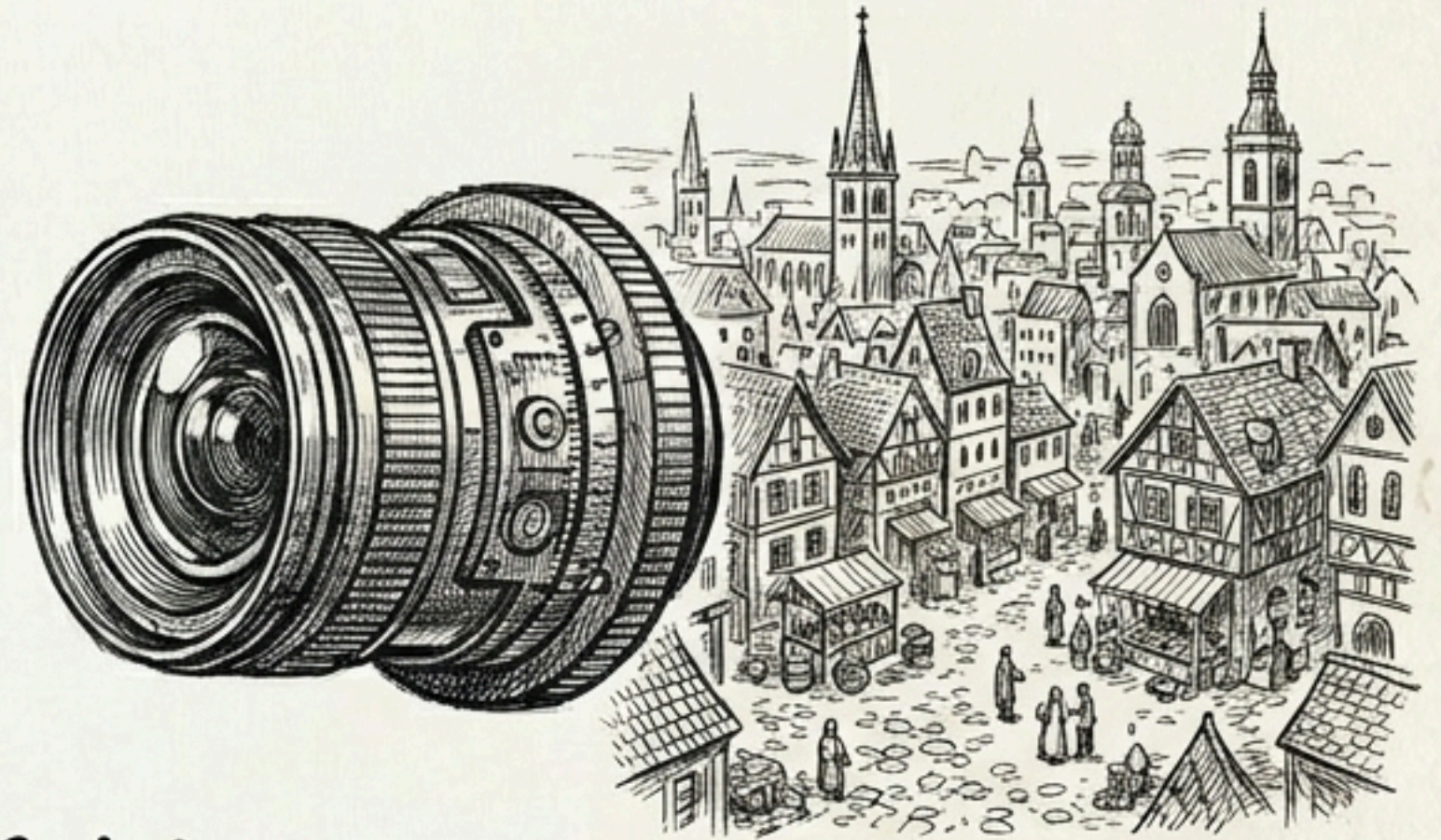
Luther

Focused on Soteriology (Salvation).

Question: How is a person saved?

Answer: Faith alone.

Scope: Kept old structures: liturgical worship, bishops, baptismal regeneration, Christ's physical presence in communion.



Calvin

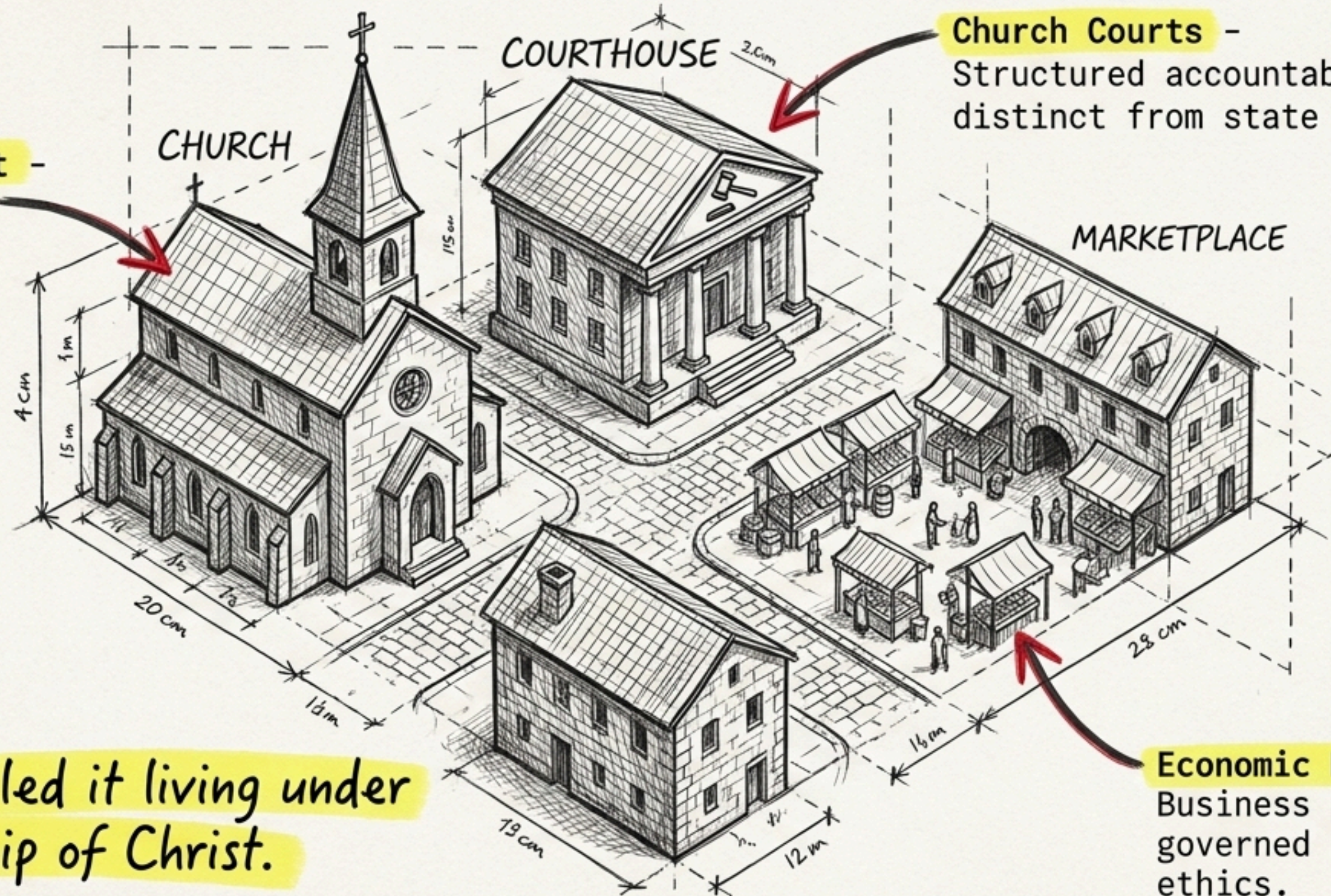
Focused on Everything.

Question: If scripture is our authority, shouldn't it govern all of life?

Scope: Focused on salvation plus worship, church structure, politics, business, and family.

Geneva: Blueprint of a Reordered Society

Moral Oversight -
Strict church discipline and theological instruction.



Church Courts -
Structured accountability
distinct from state power.

From Geneva, the system spread:
Knox (Scotland/Presbyterians) →
Netherlands (Dutch Reformed) →
→ France (Huguenots) →
England (Puritans).

“ Calvin called it living under the kingship of Christ.”

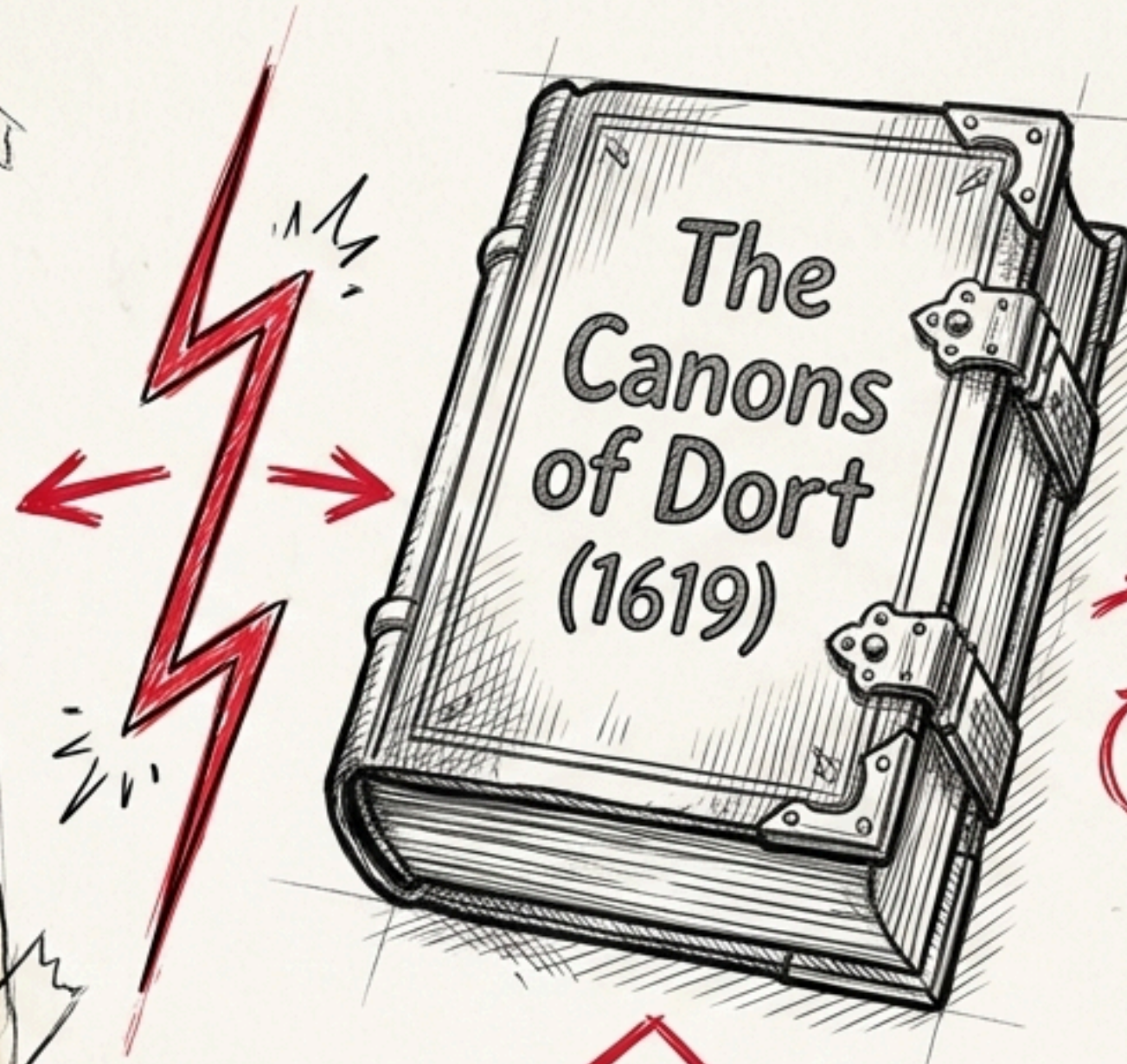
Economic Regulations -
Business practices governed by biblical ethics.

The Catalyst for TULIP

5 Articles of Remonstrance (1610)

Jacobus Arminius' Followers argued:

1. Ability to choose God.
2. Election based on foreseen faith.
3. Universal atonement.
4. Grace can be resisted.
5. Salvation can be lost.



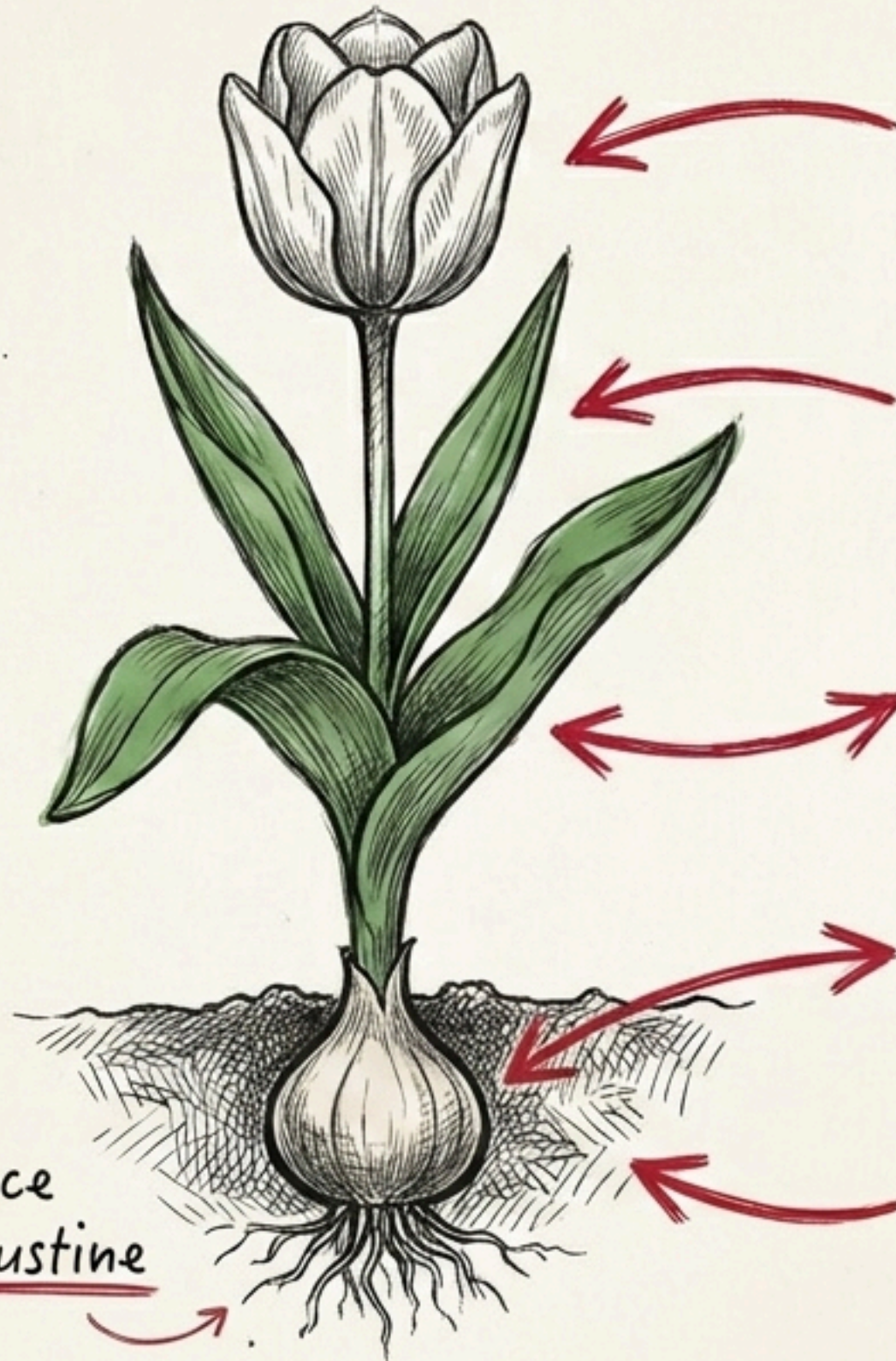
The Synod of Dort (International Protestant Council) responded:

Examined scripture and Augustine for months.

Issued a definitive Latin rebuttal rejecting all five Arminian points.

Fun Fact: The actual acronym 'T.U.L.I.P.' didn't exist at Dort. It was invented as a memory device in the early 1900s!

The Anatomy of TULIP (Soteriology)



Flower (P): "Perseverance of the Saints – True believers will endure because God preserves them, not because of human strength."

Leaves (I): "Irresistible Grace – God changes the hearts of the elect so they willingly come. It always accomplishes its purpose."

Stem (L): "Limited Atonement – Christ's death was infinite in value, but definite in purpose: designed to actually secure salvation for the elect."

Bulb (U): "Unconditional Election – God chose specific people purely by sovereign grace, not based on their foreseen merit."

Soil (T): "Total Inability – Sin affects the whole being. We are spiritually dead (a corpse can't resurrect itself). God must move first."

All roots trace back to Augustine (400 AD).

The Core Riddle Solved



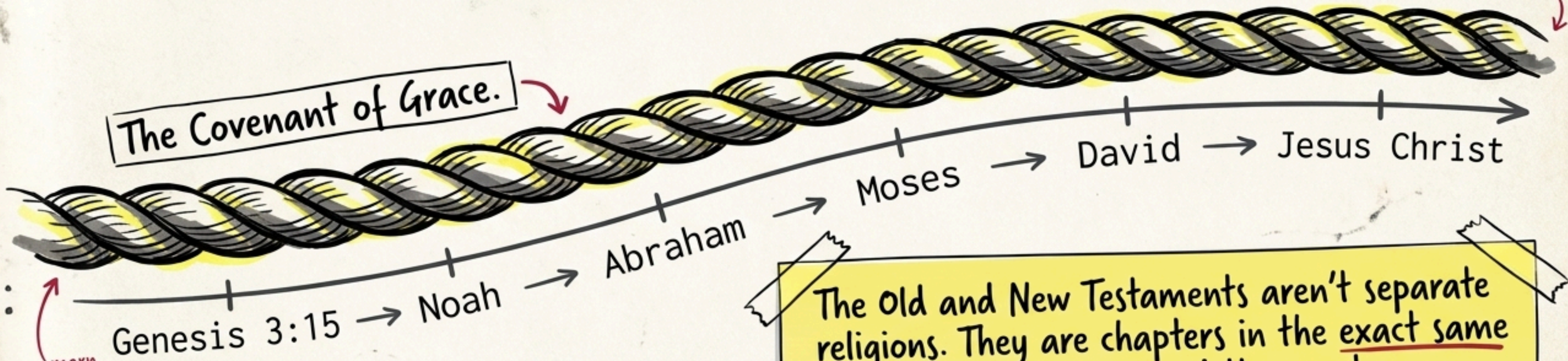
Reformed Pillar I: Covenant Theology

The Covenant of Works (Adam).



Obey perfectly, live forever. Result: Adam failed. The rope snaps.

The Covenant of Grace.



The Old and New Testaments aren't separate religions. They are chapters in the exact same story. Abraham was saved the exact same way we are: by believing God's promise.

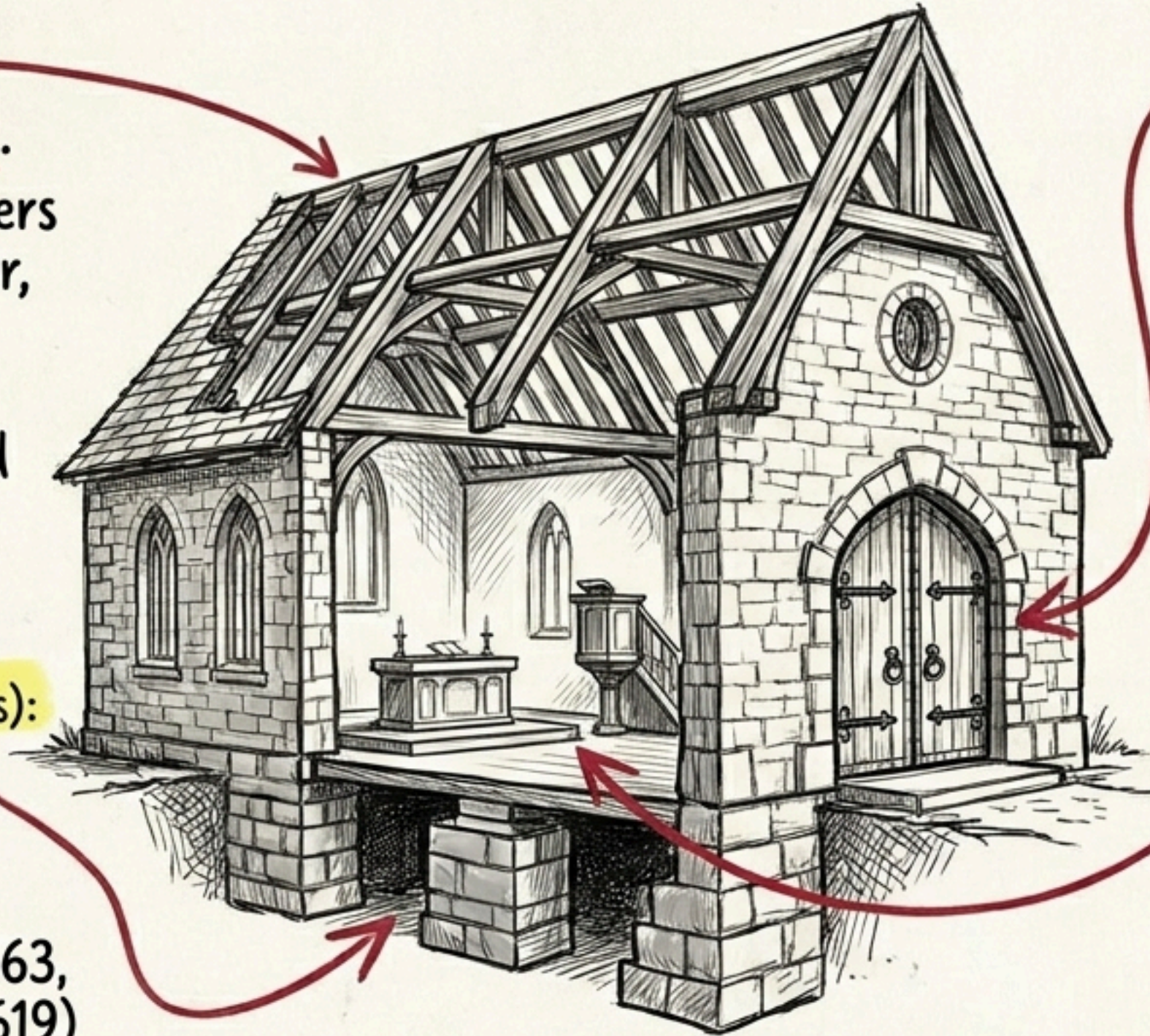
Pillars II-V: The Architecture of a Reformed Church

The Frame (Polity): Presbyterian Government.

- Ruled by a session of elders (no single celebrity pastor, no pure democracy).
- Accountable upward to Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies.

The Foundation (Confessions): Historic Standards.

- Pastors vow to uphold detailed historical documents (Heidelberg 1563, Westminster 1646, Dort 1619) rather than reinventing theology.



The Doors (Sacraments): Covenant Signs.

- Infant Baptism (marking covenant children, like circumcision) and The Lord's Supper (spiritual presence of Christ, not just symbolic).

The Altar (Worship): The Regulative Principle.

- Only do what God explicitly commands in scripture (Preaching, Psalms, Sacraments). Drama, dance, and creative inventions are out.

The Family Tree Diagnostic Matrix

Universal Belief →	Believes TULIP?	Infant Baptism?	Presbyterian Polity?	Confessional?	Regulative Worship?
Historic Reformed (Dutch/Presbyterian)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reformed Baptists (1689 Confession)	✓	✗	✗ <u>Congregational</u>	✓	✓
Calvinist Evangelicals (e.g., Piper, Keller)	✓	✗	✗	✗ <u>Contemporary</u>	✗
Anglican Calvinists (39 Articles)	✓	✓	✗ <u>Bishops</u>	✓	✗ <u>Liturgical</u>
Non-Denom Calvinists	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗

Beyond Labels: Why Precision Matters

Clarity.

Calvinist describes your view on salvation.

Reformed describes your historic church tradition.

Use them accurately.

Identity.

It prevents reducing the rich, comprehensive Reformed tradition to just a five-point debate about predestination.

Direction.

It reveals how a church makes decisions, disciplines leaders, and views the Bible.

“Calvinism answers how we’re saved. Reformed theology asks how a saved people should live, worship, and walk together for a lifetime.”