

Several years ago, a friend gave me a bound copy of Dr. Daniel's notes on the history of Calvinism and the doctrines of grace. I've kept it nearby ever since. It's one of the most useful and informative resources in my entire library—well written, crystal clear, and thorough without being ponderous. I'm delighted to see this expanded edition in print.

**John MacArthur, Senior Pastor, Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California, President of the Master's Seminary and the Master's University**

This invaluable volume is a virtual goldmine containing the rich history and theology of the Reformed truths known as Calvinism. The beauty of this book is its comprehensive breadth and accessible readability that surveys the vast landscape of this immense subject matter. Ever since these pages first appeared years ago, it has been a trusted guide to me to navigate my journey through the many pivotal individuals, strategic movements, and doctrinal issues of biblical Calvinism. No serious student of church history or systematic theology can afford to be without this work in your personal library.

**Steven J. Lawson, President, OnePassion Ministries, Dallas, TX**

Curt is a proven scholar and a personal devotee of the doctrines to which he gives such careful attention in this book. It does not merely go over the well-known history already present in many volumes (though it does not ignore that) but gives both substance and perspective that is needed today in a time when there is growing renewed interest in these doctrines. I personally hope that you will pursue the opportunity to publish this substantial volume which interacts so thoroughly with Calvinism in its various nuances and denominational expressions.

**Tom Nettles, Professor of Church History, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky**

There is no doubt that Calvinism (even though John Calvin would abhor the term) has played a critical role in the history of the Christian faith. Amazingly, though, there have been very few studies that have sought to provide a comprehensive overview of both its history and theology. Dr Daniel's survey of the narrative and thought of this influential worldview does just that and does it magisterially. This textbook (for that is what it truly is) is thus very welcome and will be enormously helpful for all who are interested in this tremendous Christian movement.

**Michael A. G. Haykin, Chair & professor of Church History, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky**

It would be pretty hard to overstate how helpful Curt Daniel's notes on Calvinism have been in my study of historical theology and the Protestant Reformation. He has an uncanny knack for untangling hard theological knots and deftly sweeping away confusion and misunderstanding. I have gained more insight from this volume than from any other book on systematic theology or church history, and yet this is a resource I can (and regularly do) recommend to lay people—even those who are just beginning to study theology seriously. It's rare and refreshing to find a treatise on theology that is so comprehensive and yet so easy to read. This is that book. Get a copy. I promise you will thank me for the recommendation.

**Phil Johnson, Executive Director, Grace to You**

The History and Theology of Calvinism is a fascinating, tortuous, compelling drama. Curt Daniel, through a lifetime of study, deftly and insightfully sketches the course and essential content of that drama. Daniel understands the variegated nature of Calvinism and ably guides us through the highs and lows of the drama, never failing to engage us with the often-maligned characters and often misunderstood theology that constitute historic Calvinism. This is a book that is vast in its sweep and deep in its analysis. I highly recommend it.

**Ian Hamilton, Professor of Systematic Theology, Edinburgh Theological Seminary, Edinburgh, Scotland; and editor, Banner of Truth magazine**

Curt Daniel has done extensive research into the history and theology of Calvinism and has written one of the most helpful and readable treatments of Calvinism in print. The comments are fair and irenic, and the book attempts to cover the entire sweep of Calvinism (including much information on Puritanism and other Reformed groups, past and present). It is worth its weight in gold!

**Lance Quinn, Senior Pastor, Bethany Bible Church, Thousand Oaks, California**

# **The History and Theology of Calvinism**

Curt Daniel

## **EP BOOKS**

(Evangelical Press) Registered Office: 140 Coniscliffe  
Road, Darlington, Co Durham DL3 7RT

[www.epbooks.org](http://www.epbooks.org)  
[admin@epbooks.org](mailto:admin@epbooks.org)

[www.epbooks.org](http://www.epbooks.org)  
[admin@epbooks.org](mailto:admin@epbooks.org)

EP Books are distributed in the USA by:

JPL Books  
[www.jplbooks.com](http://www.jplbooks.com)  
[orders@jplbooks.com](mailto:orders@jplbooks.com)

and

10ofThose Ltd  
[www.10ofthose.com](http://www.10ofthose.com)  
[sales.us@10ofthose.com](mailto:sales.us@10ofthose.com)

© Curt Daniel 2019. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations  
in this publication are from Holy Bible, New King James Version, © 1982  
Thomas Nelson, Inc. All rights reserved.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

ISBN 978-1-78397-282-1

# Contents

## with Brief Summaries

Foreword by Joel Beeke	16
Foreword by John MacArthur	19
Preface	23
Introduction	25

### The History of Calvinism

1. Pre-Calvinism	33
<i>The doctrines distinctive to Calvinism were gradually developed by Augustine, Gottschalk, Thomas Bradwardine, and others long before the Reformation.</i>	
2. The Reformation	42
<i>The main branches of the Reformation were the Lutheran, the Anabaptist, and the Reformed.</i>	
3. John Calvin	48
<i>John Calvin built on the foundation of Zwingli to become the most well-known and influential exponent of Reformed theology through his many writings, amid several controversies.</i>	
4. The Spread of Calvinism	54
<i>Reformed theology developed in the late sixteenth century in Switzerland, southern Germany, the Netherlands, England, Scotland, and eastern Europe.</i>	
5. The Synod of Dort	61
<i>Dutch Calvinists resisted the challenge of Jacob Arminius and the Remonstrants at the Synod of Dort.</i>	
6. Seventeenth-Century Calvinism	67
<i>Calvinism continued to flourish through Reformed scholasticism, the Dutch Further Reformation, and Covenant Theology, with parallels in Jansenism and Cyril Lucaris.</i>	

7. **The Puritans** 76  
*British Calvinists from 1570 to 1700 developed Reformed theology among Anglicans, Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists in the context of the English Civil War and covenantal disputes in Scotland.*
8. **The Westminster Assembly** 88  
*The high point of English Puritanism was reached from 1643 to 1648 in the Westminster Assembly and its confession, catechisms, and other documents.*
9. **Amyraldism** 93  
*The seventeenth century saw the rise of a moderate form of Reformed theology mainly associated with Moÿse Amyraut in France.*
10. **Hyper-Calvinism** 99  
*An extreme form of High Calvinism arose in the early eighteenth century that denied the free offer and a universal saving will of God in the gospel and sometimes denied common grace and duty faith.*
11. **Eighteenth-Century Calvinism** 108  
*The Reformed faith declined in some quarters while facing various controversies but also experienced revival.*
12. **New England Theology** 114  
*New England Calvinism began with the Pilgrim Fathers, reached its high point with Jonathan Edwards, and declined through his successors.*
13. **The Princeton Theology** 126  
*Orthodox Calvinism was promoted by Princeton Theological Seminary from 1812 until its division in 1929, when the torch was passed to Westminster Theological Seminary.*
14. **Nineteenth-Century American Calvinism** 131  
*There were major controversies among Presbyterians, German Reformed, and Baptist Calvinists in America, but there were also many giants of the Reformed faith.*
15. **Nineteenth-Century European Calvinism** 137  
*Reformed theology continued amid challenges in Germany, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, England, and Scotland and prospered among the orthodox.*

16. Neo-Orthodoxy 146  
*An aberrant spinoff from historic Calvinism arose in the twentieth century in the theologies of Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Thomas Torrance, and various American theologians.*
17. Twentieth-Century American Calvinism 155  
*Calvinism splintered among Presbyterians, Dutch-American Reformed, Baptists, and others but experienced a resurgence in the last few decades.*
18. Twentieth-Century British Calvinism 165  
*There were notable Reformed preachers and theologians in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland in the twentieth century.*
19. Twentieth-Century International Calvinism 171  
*The Reformed faith continued to grow in the face of controversies in the Netherlands, France, Canada, and South Africa and began to spread in Australia, the Far East, and elsewhere.*

## The Theology of Calvinism

### The Sovereignty of God

20. The Sovereignty of God 183  
*A key feature of Calvinism is its doctrine of the transcendence, independence, authority, and absolute sovereignty of God.*
21. Absolute Predestination 194  
*God foreordained in eternity everything that will happen in time.*
22. Objections to Predestination 204  
*Various objections to the Reformed doctrine of predestination can be answered from the Bible.*
23. Foreknowledge 213  
*God knows everything that will ever happen because He has foreordained everything, contrary to the error of Open Theism.*
24. Providence 220  
*God sovereignly guides all things in creation by providence, including miracles.*

25. The Will of God 227  
*The will of God has been revealed to us in a twofold manner: the secret will of predestination and the revealed will of law and gospel.*
26. Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility 238  
*It is a biblical paradox that God is sovereign and man is responsible, but God intervenes in the will of man, who remains accountable.*
27. Prayer and the Sovereignty of God 245  
*The interplay of divine sovereignty and human responsibility is illustrated in the practice of prayer.*
28. The Glory of God 252  
*The ultimate goal of predestination and providence is the display of the beauty and glory of God through Jesus Christ.*

## The Five Points of Calvinism

### Total Depravity

29. The Origin of Sin 257  
*God is not the author or approver of sin, yet He foreordained sin to come into existence as part of His overall plan.*
30. The Problem of Evil 271  
*God tempts no man but allows sin and tragedy to occur as part of His plan to reveal His glory.*
31. Original Sin 279  
*The sin and guilt of Adam has been passed on and imputed to all humans, though Calvinists differ on the exact means this is done.*
32. Total Depravity 289  
*Sin affects and controls all aspects of humans, such as their bodies, hearts, minds, emotions, consciences, and wills.*
33. The Depth of Depravity 300  
*Sinners are spiritually dead children of the devil, who hate God and love sin and are far more wicked than they realize.*
34. The Bondage of the Will 316  
*Sinners are slaves of sin and Satan and are morally unable to think or will any spiritual good until they are freed by Jesus Christ in salvation.*



35. Total Depravity and Human Responsibility 325  
*Sinners do not have a neutral “free will,” but their sinful state leaves them morally accountable and guilty before God.*
- Unconditional Election**
36. Unconditional Election 333  
*In eternity God unconditionally chose some sinners to be saved.*
37. The Election of Grace 341  
*By sovereign grace, God elected some sinners and wrote their names permanently in the Book of Life.*
38. Election and Foreknowledge 348  
*God chose the elect by special love and not by foreseeing their faith or anything good in them.*
39. Election in Christ 354  
*God the Father chose the elect in, through, and for Jesus Christ, who was chosen to be their Head and Savior.*
40. The Covenant of Redemption 361  
*The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit covenanted together in choosing a people to be the bride of Christ in a covenant of salvation, love, and glory.*
41. Objections to Election 370  
*Various objections to the Reformed doctrine of election can be answered from the Bible.*
42. The Destiny of the Elect 382  
*The elect were chosen to enjoy salvation, eternal life, holiness, conformity to the image of Christ, glorification in heaven, and eternal love with God.*
43. Practical Implications of Election 389  
*Christians may know they are elect and should live for God in humility, holiness, and love.*
44. The Doctrine of Reprobation 397  
*The Bible teaches that God has not chosen all sinners to salvation but passed over many of them and left them to be punished for their sins.*

45. The Hardening of the Reprobate 412  
*God blinds the minds and hardens the hearts of the reprobate and withholds saving grace from them to prepare them for judgment.*
46. The Destiny of the Reprobate 422  
*Those whom God did not choose are destined to be punished for their sins eternally and consciously in hell to glorify God's justice and wrath.*
47. The Relation of Election and Reprobation 432  
*There are more reprobate than elect, while election is primary, and there are other relations between the two.*
48. The Order of the Decrees 442  
*Mainstream Calvinism correctly teaches the biblical truth of infralapsarianism rather than a supralapsarian or Amyraldian order of the decrees.*
49. The Election of Angels 456  
*God chose some angels to remain holy but allowed the rest of the angels to fall into sin and never be saved.*
50. The Election of Dying Infants 467  
*God chose all dying infants as a class by sovereign grace to be saved and go to heaven.*
51. The Destiny of the Unevangelized 480  
*God did not choose to salvation any of the sinners who never hear the gospel, for Christ is the only way to salvation, so the unevangelized will be punished justly for their sins.*
- Limited Atonement**
52. The Extent of the Atonement 492  
*Christ died especially for the elect, but there is a general aspect of the atonement for all men.*
53. Limited Atonement 508  
*The primary design of the atonement was that Christ died to effectually satisfy the wrath of God for the elect and guarantee their salvation.*
54. Objections to Limited Atonement 521  
*Various objections to the Reformed doctrine of limited atonement may be answered from the Bible.*

## Irresistible Grace

55. Irresistible Grace 53 I  
*God irresistibly draws the elect to Christ in salvation by the effectual power of the Holy Spirit.*
56. The New Birth 54 I  
*God sovereignly bestows regeneration on the elect through the Word of God, so they are passive, and the Spirit is active, and thus regeneration precedes faith.*
57. The Gift of Faith 55 I  
*God sovereignly gives saving faith to the elect, so they are justified by faith alone and not by their good works.*
58. The Order of Salvation 55 9  
*The logical order of salvation is calling, regeneration, faith, repentance, justification, adoption, and glorification.*
59. Common Grace 57 I  
*God has a general love for all sinners, by which He restrains their sin, enables them to do outward good and develop the various spheres of culture, and prepares the elect for salvation.*

## The Perseverance of the Saints

60. Preservation of the Saints 58 2  
*God preserves all the regenerated elect so that they stay saved and never lose their salvation.*
61. Perseverance of the Saints 59 4  
*God continues to work in the hearts of the regenerate elect so they continue to live lives of faith, repentance, and obedience, thus preventing apostasy or continual backsliding.*
62. Objections to Eternal Security 60 5  
*Various objections to the Reformed doctrine of preservation and perseverance can be answered from the Bible.*

## Miscellaneous Doctrines

63. Holy Scripture 61 4  
*The Reformed faith holds to certain distinctive doctrines regarding the*

- infallibility, perspicuity, authority and providential preservation of Scripture, as well as the analogy of faith and the self-authenticating witness of the Spirit.*
64. The Two Natures of Christ 622  
*Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully man in one person, without any mixture or communication of attributes between the natures.*
65. The Active and Passive Obedience of Christ 635  
*In justification, God imputes the active obedience of Christ's holy life as well as the passive obedience of His atoning death.*
66. The Law 649  
*Calvinists believe in the three uses and three divisions of the law in contrast to legalism and antinomianism.*
67. Covenant Theology 656  
*God has worked progressively in history through a series of related covenants, in contrast with Dispensationalism.*
68. The Church 664  
*Mainstream Calvinism practices a presbyterial form of church government, in which the marks of the true church are important and the Regulative Principle of Worship is practiced.*
69. The Sacraments 673  
*There are only two true sacraments, namely baptism and Communion, and Christians enjoy spiritual fellowship with Christ in the Lord's Supper by the Word and the Spirit.*
70. Calvinistic Apologetics 681  
*Reformed theologians have used various methods to defend the Christian faith, and the best is an improvement on Presuppositionalism, which may be termed biblical apologetics.*
71. Reformed Evangelism 691  
*Reformed Christians practice biblical evangelism in keeping with the sovereignty of God and the five points while avoiding Arminian abuses such as "easy believism."*
72. Arminianism 699  
*Arminianism is an evangelical form of Semi-Pelagianism, a rival to Calvinism, and an error but not necessarily a damnable heresy.*

73. The Practical Application of Calvinism	711
<i>Calvinists should have a biblical worldview, avoid certain problems, and cultivate spiritual attitudes in keeping with their distinctive theology.</i>	
74. Calvinism Today and Tomorrow	720
<i>There are varieties of Calvinism, but they are all God-centered and guide us optimistically to the future.</i>	
Calvinism vs. Arminianism Chart	729
Bibliography	731

## Foreword by Joel Beeke

You and I are living in a unique time. Relativism and religious tolerance have won the day in our culture. Truth, the world tells us, is whatever you make it out to be. Men and women are encouraged to determine their own identity, their own moral standards, and their own beliefs about God, history, and the afterlife. A god may exist, but that is up to you to decide. Sadly, many professing Christians have been swept away by this tide of postmodern madness.

Yet there is something remarkable happening against this dismal backdrop. By God's grace, we are witnessing a substantial revival of Calvinism in Christ's church around the world. Christians living in this relativistic, "wishy-washy" age are in search of strong, transcendent truths worth living and dying for. And multitudes are discovering such hearty, soul-satisfying truths in Reformed theology.

This revival of Calvinism — though in many places only partial and by no means without shortfalls — is cause for rejoicing and for prayer that God will multiply, purify, and mature it. For the sovereign, gracious God of Reformed theology is nothing more and nothing less than the God of the Bible. He is the true and living God who created and rules over you and me. And when many are coming to see and savor Him in His majestic splendor and beauty, we ought to rejoice!

I trust, in God's providence, that such rejoicing will be the result of Christians reading this helpful work by my good friend, Curt Daniel. *The History and Theology of Calvinism* is a gold mine for those wanting to know more about Calvinistic thought. The great value of this work lies in its wedding together of history and theology in an accessible, pastoral, and theocentric manner. Dr. Daniel argues that central to Calvinism is its God-centeredness, and his work exemplifies this throughout. He is captivated by the glory of the Triune God and zealous for us to see this God more accurately and worshipfully. If your intentions in picking up this book are merely academic, you have come to the wrong place. The author is certainly after your mind, but only that thereby you might be impelled to holiness and doxology. He wants you to catch a vision of the grandeur of God that changes you.

If you know next to nothing about church history, do not be intimidated by the size of this work. Curt's sketch of the history of Calvinism is concise

and easily understandable. And even if you are quite knowledgeable about the history of the church, there is something here for you. Readers may be surprised to find that the history of Calvinism does not begin with a German monk and 95 theses in 1517 but reaches back into the ancient and medieval church. Tracing the unity and diversity of the movement, we are given a historical picture of Calvinism in all its developments and declines. This is vital for Christians to understand, for far too many of us are impoverished and vulnerable due to a lack of insight into the origins of our rich theological heritage.

Theologically, this book focuses on those doctrines that are peculiar to Calvinism, especially the doctrines of grace (i.e., the five points of Calvinism). He argues convincingly that these truths are not forced onto the Bible but are actually drawn out of the Bible. He is also not afraid to wrestle with difficult matters such as the free offer of the gospel, the problem of evil, and the salvation of dying infants. But he does so in a user-friendly way, with the Scriptures as his authority.

There is an evident polemical thrust to this work. It does not shy away from confronting unorthodox theology, providing fair analysis and sound critique of Arminianism, Hyper-Calvinism, and Neo-Orthodoxy. Along with this, it would appear that no stone has been left unturned when it comes to responding to objections concerning Calvinism. The reader will find every conceivable complaint against such Word-based, God-centered, Calvinistic truth being set forth in this book with gracious, biblical responses. Curt's dealing with these various objections is alone worth the price of the book and will prove invaluable for pastors and others who have questions or doubts about Reformed doctrine.

While this work is profoundly historical, theological, and polemical, readers will also encounter a pastoral warmth and wisdom. This is evidenced in chapter titles such as "Prayer and the Sovereignty of God," "Practical Implications of Election," and "The Practical Application of Calvinism." Practical insights are not limited to these chapters, however, but are skillfully woven throughout. Curt shows us the life-transforming relevance of the Reformed faith. There is no room here for ivory tower theologians. Truly, Calvinism is doctrine for all of life.

Curt Daniel has done the twenty-first-century church a great service in writing *The History and Theology of Calvinism*. Whether you are a new Calvinist, an old Calvinist, or no Calvinist at all, there is much benefit to be derived from these pages. One does not need to agree with every detail of this large book to

appreciate and mine the riches of historical and biblical truth it offers. Here indeed are truths worth living and dying for.

May God be pleased to use this book to spread the cause of biblical, confessional, experiential, pastoral, practical Calvinism far and wide, for His glory and for the good of His people.

*Joel R. Beeke*



## Foreword by John MacArthur

Charles Spurgeon famously wrote,

I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel, if we do not preach justification by faith, without works.<sup>1</sup>

Those three sentences have been subjected to lots of misunderstanding, misapplication, and controversy by Calvinism’s allies and opponents alike. But taken in context and understood as Spurgeon intended it, the point he makes is exactly right — and it is an important one.

Consider the easy part of Spurgeon’s statement first: “It is a nickname...” “Calvinism” is actually something of a misnomer. Although we normally use the term to designate those key articles of faith that are often grouped together under the acronym TULIP and collectively called “the five points of Calvinism,” I generally prefer to speak of “the doctrines of grace.” Those five doctrines have a long pedigree that goes back through Augustine to the apostles, who learned them from Jesus himself. And our Lord was not introducing new ideas either. Every one of the five points is taught in the Old Testament.

It was a group of Dutch Remonstrants (the original Arminians) who singled out those five points in order to dispute them. They tied them forever to Calvin’s name. Calvin himself never outlined his doctrine in five points.

Furthermore, the notion that Calvin was proposing a new or distinctive system of theology was repugnant to him. His most famous doctrinal treatise, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, is well-salted with quotations from patristic sources dating back to the earliest days of the church age. And in a prefatory address at the beginning of the work, speaking of his Roman Catholic critics, he wrote,

They unjustly set the ancient fathers against us (I mean the ancient writers of a better age of the church) as if in them they had supporters of their own impiety. If the contest were to be determined by patristic authority, the tide of

---

<sup>1</sup> Susannah Spurgeon and Joseph Harrald, *The Autobiography of Charles H. Spurgeon: Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records*, 4 vols. (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1899), 1:172.

victory would turn to our side. Now, these fathers have written many wise and excellent things. Still, these so-called pious children of theirs, with all their sharpness of wit and judgment and spirit, worship only the faults and errors of the fathers. The good things that these fathers have written they either do not notice, or misrepresent or pervert. You might say that their only care is to gather dung amid gold. Then, with a frightful to-do, they overwhelm us as despisers and adversaries of the fathers! But we do not despise the fathers; in fact, if it were to our present purpose, I could with no trouble at all prove that the greater part of what we are saying today meets [the Church Fathers'] approval.<sup>2</sup>

Calvin was clearly convinced of the antiquity and the biblical foundation of every doctrine he ever confessed. He said, "By calling it 'new' they do great wrong to God, whose Sacred Word does not deserve to be accused of novelty."<sup>3</sup> He abominated the notion that what he taught was original or unique to him. Had he known that the doctrines of grace would eventually gain a nickname implying that he was their inventor or discoverer, I am quite sure he would have strenuously objected.

For the sake of argument, however, and as a convenient way of speaking in shorthand, we adopt and accept the nickname "Calvinism." In doing so, we are not professing fidelity to a man — or even to his complete system of doctrine. Of course, there are countless Baptists who embrace the so-called five points of Calvinism. Every one of them would differ strongly with Calvin's view of the sacraments. I do not know of a single credible theologian or popular teacher who slavishly follows John Calvin as if the Reformer's writings had ex cathedra authority. "Calvinism" is simply a convenient and generally well understood label for the five articles of doctrine Arminians commonly dispute.

But what did Spurgeon mean when he wrote, "Calvinism is the gospel"? He was not suggesting, of course, that the gospel is a message about John Calvin. Nor was he saying there are no true believers except those who have mastered and embraced Calvinism as a system. Spurgeon himself had numerous Arminian friends whom he counted as dear brethren in Christ and spiritual allies in his battle against modernism. He could not have been suggesting that saving faith entails wholehearted embrace of the five points. In fact, later in that same piece, Spurgeon said this:

---

<sup>2</sup> Ford Lewis Battles, trans., John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 1:18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:15.

There is no soul living who holds more firmly to the doctrines of grace than I do, and if any man asks me whether I am ashamed to be called a Calvinist, I answer — I wish to be called nothing but a Christian; but if you ask me, do I hold the doctrinal views which were held by John Calvin, I reply, I do in the main hold them, and rejoice to avow it. But far be it from me even to imagine that Zion contains none but Calvinistic Christians within her walls, or that there are none saved who do not hold our views.<sup>4</sup>

So why did he write, “Calvinism is the gospel”? Spurgeon was making a simple but profound point — namely, that the core of all gospel truth is the same principle that lies at the root of Calvinism. And it is this: Salvation is the Lord’s work, not the sinner’s.

Indeed, Spurgeon’s meaning is made crystal clear in the immediate context of those controversial three sentences. At the beginning of that same paragraph, he quotes Jonah 2:9 and comments on the truth of it:

“Salvation is of the Lord.” That is just an epitome of Calvinism; it is the sum and substance of it. If anyone should ask me what I mean by a Calvinist, I should reply, “He is one who says, Salvation is of the Lord.” I cannot find in Scripture any other doctrine than this. It is the essence of the Bible. “He only is my rock and my salvation.” Tell me anything contrary to this truth, and it will be a heresy; tell me a heresy, and I shall find its essence here, that it has departed from this great, this fundamental, this rock-truth, “God is my rock and my salvation.”<sup>5</sup>

That truth is the very essence of the gospel, and it is also the heart and the linchpin of Calvinist doctrine. It is why I am convinced that more than any other doctrinal study we might ever undertake, a sound and faithful understanding of the doctrines of grace will instruct and help anyone who is seeking to articulate the gospel with clarity and accuracy.

For years I have used and appreciated Curt Daniel’s notes on the history and doctrines of Calvinism as a key resource for learning and teaching about the doctrines of grace and the long history of Calvinism’s influence. My first exposure to Daniel’s work came sometime in the 1990s, when his notes existed only as a thick sheaf (nearly five hundred pages) of typed, photocopied notes on letter-size sheets of paper. But it has been the single most useful resource on my shelf of historical theology volumes. I along with others had urged him

---

4 Spurgeon and Harrald, *Ibid.*, 1:176.

5 *Ibid.*, 1:172.

for years to publish the work in book form. So I am thrilled to see it in this revised and expanded, quality-bound edition. I know many others will treasure it as I have.

Dr. Daniel has read and studied primary resources (perhaps more thoroughly than anyone else I know) on the history of Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism, Arminianism, and the many debates and theological nuances that arise from these topics. He earned his PhD from the University of Edinburgh with a massive dissertation on John Gill and Hyper-Calvinism. And he is as adept at teaching as he is as an academic. This current book originally grew from notes he wrote and distributed to classes of lay people. It is both comprehensive and comprehensible — easily readable, informative, and full of biblical as well as historical insight. He spent years meticulously reviewing, refining, and expanding those original notes, and the result is well worth the wait.

If you want a fuller understanding of what Spurgeon meant when he said, “Calvinism is the gospel,” I know of no better or more thorough answer than this book. Keep your copy handy. It is a resource I know you will turn to again and again.

*John MacArthur*

# Preface

A preface should be short. This one is.

I wish to thank Phil Johnson, director of Grace to You, for his valuable editorial counsel. Thanks also to Joel Beeke, David Lachman, and others for help in theological or historical areas in which they are more knowledgeable than I am. I am grateful to Gary Catherwood, Albert Crocker, Steve Lawson, and Lance Quinn for their regular encouragement to “get it published.” I owe many thanks to elders Steve and Will Andras and members of Faith Bible Church, Springfield, Illinois, for their prayers and the privilege of being their pastor. Thanks also goes to Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas, where the messages that formed the basis for this volume were first delivered from 1987–89. All errors herein are my own.

Research for this project was done at numerous seminary and university libraries, especially the matchless Speer Library of Princeton Theological Seminary. Many thanks go to head librarians Stephen Crocco and Donald Vorp and research librarian Kate Skrebutenas. I am grateful to Westminster Theological Seminary (and the late Grace Mullen), Calvin Theological Seminary (especially the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies), Dallas Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Concordia Seminary (St. Louis, Missouri), Covenant Theological Seminary, Saint Louis University, and others. The foundation for my studies in Calvinism reaches back to my doctoral studies at New College, The University of Edinburgh, 1976–83. I made extensive use of The British Library, The Evangelical Library, and Dr. Williams’ Library, all in London.

Let me offer my heartfelt thanks to the editorial staff of my publisher. Many thanks also go to Liz Smith for preparing the manuscript for publication. Without her expert editorial assistance and advice, this Herculean project could never have been finished.

All biblical quotations are from the New King James Version except where indicated.

I dedicate this book to the loving memory of my late parents, Guy and Doris Daniel.



# Introduction

The volume you are holding is a middle-level handbook, a sort of “Calvinism 202” textbook that bridges the gap between the many short introductions (Steele-Thomas-Quinn, Palmer, etc.) and the more advanced scholarly works (Heppel, Muller, Turretin, etc.). It is rather like Loraine Boettner’s classic, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, which served its generation well but is now somewhat outdated.

It should be used for what it is and not judged for what it does not claim to be. It is not a systematic theology, theological dictionary, or Bible commentary. Some readers will wish I employed more biblical exegesis. Others will wish that I had devoted more space to their favorite persons (like John Owen) or topics (such as union with Christ). I cannot say everything, but I can say something. If the Lord wills, I plan to write a much more extensive and scholarly history of Reformed theology as well as in-depth treatments of limited atonement and Hyper-Calvinism.

This work is based on an unpublished syllabus consisting of seventy-five weekly handouts prepared to accompany public messages delivered from 1987–89.<sup>1</sup> Many persons have requested that I revise, correct, and update that syllabus. This is that. The syllabus should be retired and not quoted; it has many errors in it and was meant only for private distribution and not publication. Furthermore, no one has my permission to put it on the internet (some have done so, even for profit). In Christian charity and fairness, I ask that those who have pirated it remove it from their websites.

I have included hundreds of illustrative quotations from Calvinist writers. This is to illustrate what I wish to say in the way that preachers quote other preachers or writers. That is, they are illustrations not authorities. Scripture alone is our authority. The quotes will introduce readers to writers worth reading. The large bibliography will direct interested students to further studies, often of a more detailed nature. I have especially quoted Augustine because of his enormous influence, Jonathan Edwards because he is my favorite theologian, and John Calvin for obvious reasons. When I document a quote from Calvin’s *Institutes*, I use the standard method of book, chapter, and section, but I add page numbers

---

<sup>1</sup> The audio messages, now partially outdated, may be heard on [Sermonaudio.com](http://Sermonaudio.com). I do not object that other websites have put them online, so long as they are not accessible for profit.

from the standard McNeill-Battles edition for those readers unaccustomed to the accepted manner of citation. I also use Arabic numbers rather than Roman numerals, which is becoming increasingly popular, just as modern theological writers quote Scripture as “John 3:16” rather than “John III:16.”

One may ask at the outset, *What is Calvinism?* In one sense, it is simply the theology of John Calvin. In another sense, it is the theology that he shared with the other Swiss Reformers or that which was taught by his theological successors who amplified or modified his teaching on certain subjects. Some define Calvinism in terms of the consensus of the great Reformed confessions. Abraham Kuyper once wisely commented that “a system is not known in what it has in common with other preceding systems; but that it is distinguished by that which it differs from those preceding systems.”<sup>2</sup> Calvinism shares many things in common with historic Lutheranism, Arminianism, Anabaptism, and even Roman Catholicism, but I concentrate on where Calvinists differ from them.<sup>3</sup> Calvinists agree with other truly evangelical Protestants on the five *sola* doctrines (*sola Scriptura*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *solus Christus*, *solus Deo gloria*)<sup>4</sup> and the five fundamentals (verbal inspiration, virgin birth, vicarious atonement, victorious resurrection, visible return of Christ). But it seems to me the five points of Calvinism are not held by any other evangelical theology, though Luther came close, as did several of the pre-Calvinists such as Augustine, Gottschalk, Bradwardine, and Wycliffe.

If historic Lutheranism has emphasized *sola fide*, Calvinism has emphasized *solus Deo gloria*. This comes as close as any other doctrine to being the “central dogma” of Reformed theology. Some writers have nominated union with Christ, the covenant, the Holy Spirit, or other subjects to that position. In my opinion, the distinctives of Calvinism are best seen in its view of divine sovereignty and the doctrines of grace, better known as the *five points of Calvinism*.<sup>5</sup> This is usually the case in the popular mind. Only Calvinists hold to these

2 Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931/70), 100.

3 So, for example, Edward A. Engelbrecht, ed., *The Lutheran Difference: An Explanation & Comparison of Christian Beliefs* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2010).

4 For Reformed expositions of the five *solas*, see: Terry L. Johnson, *The Case for Traditional Protestantism: The Solas of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2004); James Montgomery Boice, *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001); and R. C. Sproul Jr., ed., *After Darkness, Light* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003).

5 Kenneth J. Stewart suggests that the acronym TULIP can be traced no earlier than 1913. See *Ten Myths about Calvinism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 79, 291–92. The Canons of the Synod of Dort presented five “heads” of doctrine but not in the same order or enumeration as the popular TULIP.



truths. Calvinism is certainly more than the five points, but it is also not less. I would not be doing justice to the subject if I concentrated on where it agrees with others and ignored or minimized where it is unique. That I do not have discussions on, say, the resurrection of Christ or the Christian family certainly does not mean that we Calvinists do not believe in them. I will, however, show where we stand distinctively on a few subjects other than the five points.

Though there are fine points of difference between the terms *Calvinism* and *Reformed theology*, I will basically use both synonymously.<sup>6</sup> Calvin did not approve of the term *Calvinist* (or *Calvinian*, as was first used in his day), but he did once say, “We are reformed Christians.”<sup>7</sup> As we shall see, *Reformed* refers to the Swiss branch of the Reformation going back to Zwingli, in contradistinction to the Lutheran *evangelische* branch or the Anabaptist branch. Some today use the term *Truly Reformed* to differentiate themselves from modified or pseudo-Reformed teachings. Point taken. Others use the term *sovereign grace*.<sup>8</sup> Some prefer *the doctrines of grace* to *the five points of Calvinism*. In any river of thought, there are currents and backwashes but also a mainstream — hence, *mainstream Calvinism* refers to the majority report. There is truth in all these observations.

Non-Reformed Christians sometimes object: “But the word *Calvinism* is not even in the Bible. Let’s just stick with Scriptural terms.” They forget that they themselves use extra-biblical words like *Trinity* or *rapture*. Others decry the use of labels, but I would remind them that labels are useful on bottles of medicine. All disciplines use labels, and in theology we speak of Lutheranism, dispensationalism, Arminianism, and the like. Even the word *Christianity* is a label not strictly found in the Bible, though the word *Christian* is used three times, evidently coined by non-Christians (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). Spurgeon wisely commented:

Let it not be misunderstood, we only use the term for shortness. That doctrine which is called “Calvinism” did not spring from Calvin; we believe that it sprang from the great founder of all truth. Perhaps Calvin himself derived it mainly from the writings of Augustine. Augustine obtained his views, without

---

6 For instance, the Baptist writer Kenneth Good wrote *Are Baptists Calvinists?* (Oberlin: Regular Baptist Heritage Fellowship, 1975) and answered yes then later said no to the title of his book *Are Baptists Reformed?* (Lorain, Ohio: Regular Baptist Heritage Fellowship, 1986). To many Baptists, the term *Calvinist* mainly means the five points, while *Reformed* includes infant baptism and Presbyterian ecclesiology.

7 John Calvin, *Sermons on Acts 1–7* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2008), 579.

8 E.g., the Sovereign Grace Baptists, but also the charismatic Sovereign Grace Ministries movement.

doubt, through the Spirit of God, from the diligent study of the writings of Paul and Paul received them of the Holy Ghost, from Jesus Christ the great founder of the Christian dispensation. We use the term then, not because we impute any extraordinary importance to Calvin's having taught these doctrines. We would be just as willing to call them by any other name, if we could find one which would be better understood, and which on the whole would be as consistent with fact. And then again, this afternoon, we shall have very likely to speak of Arminians, and by that, we would not for a moment insinuate that all who are in membership with the Arminian body, hold those particular views. There are Calvinists in connection with the Calvinistic Churches, who are not Calvinistic, bearing the name but discarding the system.<sup>9</sup>

Likewise, Jonathan Edwards said:

However the term "Calvinist" is in these days, among most, a term of greater reproach than the term "Arminian"; yet I should not take it at all amiss, to be called a Calvinist, for distinction's sake; though I utterly disclaim dependence on Calvin, or believing the doctrines I hold, because he believed and taught them; and cannot justly be charged with believing in everything just as he taught.<sup>10</sup>

George Whitefield confessed, "I embrace the Calvinistic scheme, not because Calvin but Jesus Christ taught it to me."<sup>11</sup> Both James Montgomery Boice<sup>12</sup> and Steven Lawson<sup>13</sup> have chapters on "Christ the Calvinist," which is not really an anachronism when properly understood. I like the term *Biblical Calvinism*; I wrote a short booklet on the five points with that title. Martyn Lloyd-Jones professed to believe in "Bible Calvinism" rather than "system Calvinism."<sup>14</sup> His point is good and avoids the tendency of some to imply, "I am of Calvin," à la 1 Corinthians 1:12. The system of doctrine known as Calvinism is drawn *from* the Bible, not forced *on* the Bible.

Contrary to what many Hyper-Calvinists believe, one does not have to be a

9 Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1981), 7:298. See also *New Park Street Pulpit* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1981), 6:136.

10 Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 1:131.

11 Quoted in Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield* (London: Banner of Truth, 1970), 1:406.

12 James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 1:128–34.

13 Steven J. Lawson, *A Long Line of Godly Men* (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2006), 1:241.

14 Quoted in Christopher Catherwood, *Martyn Lloyd-Jones: His Life and Relevance for the 21st Century* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 31.

Calvinist to be a Christian. The five points do not constitute the non-negotiable essentials of the gospel. There are many godly evangelical Arminians (such as A. W. Tozer), Lutherans (such as Luther), and others. Calvin once wryly commented that some people jokingly said that “the path to paradise passes through Geneva.”<sup>15</sup> Some Lutherans would say Wittenberg. The real path passes through Calvary.

I invite our non-Calvinist friends and opponents to see exactly what we teach and not follow unfounded rumors or misunderstandings. More importantly, let us all test these teachings by Scripture.<sup>16</sup> If they are weighed in the balance and found wanting, disregard them. But if they are indeed biblical, we must believe them.

Here, then, is my survey of the history and theology of Calvinism.

---

<sup>15</sup> John Calvin, *Faith Unfeigned* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2010), 65.

<sup>16</sup> “Test all things; hold fast to what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Cf. Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1; Isaiah 8:20.