



Dr. Cooper Abrams

The false doctrines of Calvinism are making a resurgence in America and in many parts of the world. Anyone who has studied the subject knows how confusing it can sometimes be. Having known Dr. Cooper Abrams III for more than 35 years, I know him to be a godly man with a passion for the truth of God's Word. He has always been a proponent of proper biblical interpretation, not imposing his beliefs on the Bible but studying and drawing out of the Bible what is there to form the foundation of what every Christian should believe. This book is another example of Dr. Abram's candid, careful and correct examination of a false system of theology in light of Bible truth. He has made what is sometimes confusing very understandable for the ordinary Christian who longs for Bible truth.

Dr. Abrams includes key historical information about John Calvin himself which is both accurate and enlightening. He breaks down the teaching and claims of the Calvinistic system of theology and then examines key Bible passages that are often used to support Calvinism. You will read this book with great profit if you are searching for the plain Biblical truth concerning this subject. When I first read the original manuscript for this book I knew this needed to be in print. May our Lord give wide circulation to this excellent book.

Dr. Roger Baker
Calvary Baptist Bible College & Seminary
King, North Carolina



IS CALVINISM BIBLICAL? ♦ ♦ ♦ Dr. Cooper Abrams

IS CALVINISM BIBLICAL?



DR. COOPER ABRAMS

IS CALVINISM BIBLICAL?

**A BIBLICAL EXAMINATION OF CALVINISM
CONCERNING:**

- **SALVATION**
- **ELECTION**
- **PREDESTINATION**

**By Cooper P. Abrams, III
January, 2014**

SAMPLE

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FOREWORD

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INTRODUCTION

IS CALVINISM BIBLICAL?

One of the Most Debated Subjects

For centuries, Calvinism has been one of the most debated subjects along with the doctrines of election and predestination as taught by the modern Reformed movement. The importance of the subject is manifest in that it deals directly with the doctrine of salvation by grace. These two doctrines are widely debated by professing Christians who have divided themselves into opposing camps of "Calvinists" and "Arminians." However, there is a third group that is often overlooked. This group is made up of those who accept neither of these extreme views and reject the tenets of both positions. It is the view of this group that will be explained and shown to be the biblical view. The scope of this work will only address the teachings of Calvinism which are the most radical and unbiblical view.

The True Biblist

Those who believe the Bible to be the inerrant and infallible Word of God will take its doctrines seriously. The true biblist¹ appeals to God's word to find His truth in the doctrines of predestination and election, freewill and human responsibility. He will insist, that based on God's word the truth of the matter can be absolutely discerned.

Understanding the Problem

To understand the problem, let us look at the various positions held, the terms used, and a brief history of the topic. This will present a biblical solution that correctly addresses the issue and avoids the unbiblical extremes of both the Calvinists and the Arminians. The purpose of this paper is not to present an exhaustive study of the subject, but rather to address the practical side of this theological system, pointing out its unbiblical flaws for the average believer in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO CALVINISM

Calvinism is a System of Theology

Calvinism is a system of theology that is associated with the Protestant theologian John Calvin, a Frenchman, who later became a Swiss reformer (1509-1564). The term "Calvinism" refers to doctrines and practices that stemmed from his works. The tenets of modern Calvinism are based mainly on his classic work *Institutes of the Christian Religion* which was published in its final edition in 1559.² It would not be correct to state that John Calvin developed modern Calvinism; rather Calvinism is based on his work and has been expanded by his followers.

John Calvin

John Calvin was born in Noyon, a small town in Picardy, France in 1509. He was the youngest of four children, all boys. When Calvin was twelve years old his father, Gérard Cauvin (Calvin) sent him to the University of Paris to study theology. It was his father's desire since Calvin's childhood that he would study theology and become a priest in the Roman Catholic Church.³

His Education

At age twelve, around 1520 or 1521, Calvin began his education by attending the University of Paris. He received his licentiate⁴ in arts and his

master's degree. However, between 1528 and 1533, his father directed him to abandon his theological studies, and young Calvin worked on a more profitable law degree in the schools of Bourges and Orleans. Subsequently, Calvin completed his studies and was licensed to practice law.

Calvin's Transition

Calvin was raised as a devout Catholic, but it appears that he began to move toward Protestantism after reading Martin Luther's writings. There is no record of Calvin's actual conversion or his salvation, but he changed the direction of his studies from law back to theology in 1557.⁵ His conversion seems to have consisted of a slow transition to becoming a Protestant sometime between 1529 or early 1530.⁶ In Calvin writings, he emphasizes his gradual transition over time from Catholicism toward Protestant Christianity rather than a single event of conversion. He stated, "We are converted little by little to God, and by stages."⁷ Clearly, Calvin did not accept conversion as an event in one's life in which one becomes a believer and is at that moment born again. Rather he described his conversion as a gradual evolution towards God. This element in his life casts a shadow over Calvin's actual salvation. The true state of his heart cannot be known, but insight can be gleaned from his writings, and most importantly, from his actions in Geneva. However, it should be noted, that there is no example in the New Testament that would support his idea of a gradual process of salvation.

Calvin, The Reformed Protestant

What is clear is that Calvin gradually moved from being a devout Roman Catholic to becoming a devoted Reformed Protestant. However, being converted to Protestantism is not the same thing as being truly converted and spiritually “born again.” The Protestant Reformation was a reforming of Roman Catholicism, but it did not cleanse it from all its errors.

Problems With Protestantism

In reality, Protestantism retained much of the errors of Roman Catholicism such as a universal church, pederbaptism, sacraments, sprinkling as a mode of baptism, and the church as a means of salvation as seen in the practice of ex-communication. It also continued the idea of the state being under the control (in varying degrees) of the church, along with a state paid clergy. There was never in the Protestant Reformation a clear break from Catholicism. Like all cults and false religions, Protestantism was founded not solely on the Bible (Sola Scriptura), but on the writings, opinions, ideas, and councils of churchmen as to what the Bible teaches or what they thought would be proper religion.

Swiss Protestantism and Anglicanism

Swiss Protestantism was founded by John Calvin and is the foundation of Presbyterianism; Martin Luther, founded Lutheranism; and Henry VIII founded Anglicanism when he broke England away from the Roman Catholic Church. This was the same

error that Jesus condemned the religious leaders of Israel for committing. Israel too followed the writings of the rabbis in the Talmud,⁸ instead of the Torah (the Old Testament).

Calvin's "Institutes of the Christian Religion"

The modern Reformed movement is based on Calvin's *"Institutes of the Christian Religion"* and many of the teachings of the Institutes are not biblical.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT DOES HISTORY RECORD OF JOHN CALVIN'S CHARACTER?

Calvin's View of His Role

It is easily seen in the writings of John Calvin that he considered himself as having a special calling from God. He believed that throughout his life he was following, with great dedication, God's will and was the faithful defender of truth. As the pastor of Geneva he saw his role as purging the city of immorality of all kinds. His method was to use the civil government as an arm of the church to establish correct and strict laws of behavior, but also as executing judgment and punishments of offenders.

A man's true character can be seen in what he does, and not necessarily by what he says. Calvin is lauded as the greatest of Protestant theologian, and his *"Institutes of the Christian Religion"* is praised as a great work and a foundation of Reformed Protestant theology. There can be no misunderstanding that Calvin had a great respect and biblical fear of God. However, the extremes and false conclusions of this theology can certainly be questioned and shown to be unbiblical.

Calvin Based His Theology on the OT Law

Calvin based his theology almost solely on applying the Old Testament law, given to the Nation

of Israel, to Christianity. He ignored the many passages in the New Testament and that plainly state that Christians, in this dispensation, are not under the law. Paul stated,

*“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” (Romans 6:)*⁹

He further explained,

“But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.” (Romans 7:6)

There can be no question that Calvin misunderstood that the law was given as their constitution and represented both spiritual and civil law to the nation of Israel. God never intended the law to apply literally to Christians. The principles behind the laws apply to all ages, and in our age, the principles are kept willingly by born again believers, not out of compulsion, but out of a love of God, His word, and righteousness.

Calvin Burned Witches at the Stake

John Calvin had those whom he thought were witches burned at the stake. However, Christians apply the principle behind God telling Israel not to allow a witch to live, by having nothing to do with witchcraft or anything associated with the occult. (See Exod. 22:18) The law in Exodus 22:18 was a civil law given to the Nation of Israel to protect its people from the occult. Paul made it clear that Christians are not to follow the letter of the law saying,

“But now we are delivered from the law,

*that being dead wherein we were held;
that we should serve in newness of spirit,
and not in the oldness of the letter.”
(Romans 7:6)*

The Apostle further explained,

*“But now being made free from sin, and
become servants to God, ye have your
fruit unto holiness, and the end
everlasting life.” (Romans 6:22)*

Speaking of the freedom from the yoke of bondage of the law that the believer has in Christ Paul wrote,

*“Stand fast therefore in the liberty
wherewith Christ hath made us free, and
be not entangled again with the yoke of
bondage.” (Galatians 5:1)*

This doctrinal truth escaped Calvin's reasoning and he incorrectly and relentlessly applied the civil law of Israel to the citizens of Geneva.

Calvin's Obsession

It is helpful in understanding Calvin's actions, that as the senior minister of Geneva, it was his obsession to purify the citizens of city from all immoral behavior. He thought that applying the law of Moses was the solution to the problem of sinful behavior. However, in looking at the actions of John Calvin, it can be plainly seen that his theology, was based on Augustinian thought, and was administered in a tyrannical, vindictive, cruel, and unloving way. It is difficult to find in the many hundreds of books written about John Calvin many instances of him being a loving, kind, merciful, or caring man, or pastor. He ruled and lorded over his congregation

and using the civil authorities brought swift judgment on dissenters, even unto death.

In 1538, Calvin was forced to leave Geneva because of his unpopular views. Later in 1541, he was invited back. He was at first reluctant to return because of the opposition he had faced. What changed his mind was that those governing the city offered him lucrative benefits and position if he would return. The city was in turmoil, and they offered Calvin great power that he could exercise in his new office as the minister to Geneva. Their aim was to restore order to the troubled city. This power would allow him to,

“ . . . establish discipline and control behavior throughout the city.”¹⁰

Calvin the Dictator

Calvin drafted ecclesiastical ordinances that created the constitution for the Reformed Church of the city-state of Geneva.¹¹ The Consistory, one of the three governing bodies of the city, had the jurisdiction over the enforcement of Calvin's laws. Calvin set about in earnest to remolding Geneva into a “City of God.”¹² Harkness states,

“It was the duty of the State, Calvin thought, to use its powers-if need be, its sword-bearing arm- to enforce moral living and sound doctrine.”¹³

According to Harkness, “Before his death Calvin became virtually the civil as well as the ecclesiastical dictator of Geneva.”¹⁴ Calvin's grave error was in thinking that applying civil law, he could change the moral condition of the citizens of Geneva. Like every attempt to legislate morally, it miserably failed. If he