

Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism, —AND— Arminianism

A WORKBOOK

KENNETH TALBOT & GARY CRAMPTON

Introduced by
Dr. D. James Kennedy



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The authors have used many sources in writing this workbook, some acknowledged and some unacknowledged.

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Introduction

I am a Presbyterian and a Calvinist. That comes as a surprise to many even though I have worked in the Presbyterian Church for many years and served it in many capacities. Many people ask, “How can you be a Calvinist? You preach the Bible, and don’t Calvinists believe in...?”

I am a Calvinist *precisely because* I love the Bible and the God of the Bible. The doctrines of the Calvinist theological system are the doctrines of the Bible. When you get to know what we actually believe you may find you too are a Calvinist, *especially* if you love the Lord Jesus Christ and desire with all your heart to serve Him.

Calvinism represents the central message of Scripture and our doctrines are held to some degree by most evangelical Christians. One group will add a few doctrines and another will subtract a few, but most biblical Christians will find when they learn what we actually believe, that we have much in common.

Calvinists refuse to accept easy solutions to the great teachings of God which appear in the Scriptures. Perhaps the greatest tension in the Christian faith is between the authority of God and the responsibility of man. People tend to emphasize one or the other. Calvinism maintains both. Those who eliminate the responsibility of man are *Hyper-Calvinists*. Those who eliminate the authority of God are *Arminians*. Neither of these positions accurately deals with the full message of the Bible. *God’s grace is simply bigger than either exaggeration.*

Drs. Kenneth G. Talbot and W. Gary Crampton have provided in their book, *Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism, and Arminianism*, a new and fresh examination of the biblical doctrines of sovereign grace. Their views are set forth logically, biblically, and convincingly. It is a book which should be read by anyone seeking to understand the biblical doctrine of salvation.

As one who loves the doctrines of grace, I invite you to read on and find out what Calvinists really believe. You may well be surprised and you will probably begin asking questions which will take the rest of your life to answer.

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About Calvin and Arminius

John Calvin

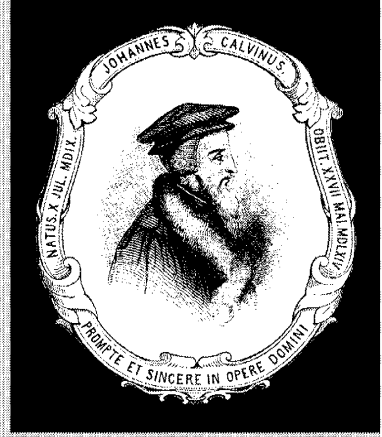
The Great Genevan Reformer, John Calvin (1509–64), was born in Noyon, a small town in northern France. It was in Paris, though, that he first came into contact with the writings of Reformers Lefèvre and Luther and later experienced a sudden conversion in 1533. After he broke with the Roman Catholic Church, he fled to Basel, Switzerland, where he began to systematize the doctrines of the Bible and, in the spring of 1536, published his defense of Reformation beliefs in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. That same year, Guillaume Farel, the fiery preacher of the Reformation in Geneva, pleaded with Calvin to stay and serve Christ's Church there. After much inner turmoil, Calvin finally consented. He set out to make Geneva a model "city of God" and to secure freedom for the Church from State control. Calvin's teachings were initially rejected, and he and Farel were banished from Geneva in 1538. After three peaceful years of preaching, teaching, and writing in Strasbourg, then part of Germany, Calvin returned to Geneva at the request of the newly elected officials. There, he drew up a Church Order which has become a standard for elder-based Church government. His greatest work toward the end of his life was the founding of the Geneva Academy, the first Protestant university in the world. For Calvin, the Bible was the sole foundation for all knowledge about God and man. He taught that it is only through the free working of God's sovereign grace that forgiveness and salvation are possible (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

Jacob Arminius

Jacob Hermandszoon, or Arminius (1560–1609), was born in Oudewater, the Netherlands. Later, he studied under Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva, and also in Italy. After he returned to his native land, he began to preach to large crowds and was subsequently installed as professor of theology at the University of Leyden. In his lectures, he began to depart from historic Calvinism, though retaining his belief in the Trinity, the deity of Christ, and salvation by faith in the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Arminius taught that God elected those who He had foreseen would believe, making God's election dependent on man. He also believed that Christ died for all men and that it is possible to fall from grace, thus denying the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit. In 1618, the Synod of Dort was called to deal with these errant doctrines and unanimously condemned them.

and the Man
Plight
of Sin

chapter three



Man and the Plight of Sin

Notes

One of the major differences in the theologies of Calvinism and Arminianism is that of the effects of sin on the human race. Both systems agree that the fall of man took place in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), and both basically maintain that the whole human race has been greatly affected by the fall. The question is: *How great is the effect?*

The Bible claims that Adam, as the first man, was the covenant head or federal representative of all humanity. Therefore, when he (as covenant head) fell, his sin was imputed to every man, woman, and child. Paul writes: “Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). The apostle says that every human being is conceived dead in sin, because of Adam’s transgression in the Garden. We are all guilty. David confirms this: “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5).

Christian theology refers to this as the doctrine of Original Sin. This doctrine teaches that all persons are judicially guilty, due to Adam’s sin. It is a legal transaction, just as Christians are legally justified due to the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to them (II Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:18, 19; see Chapter Five).

Arminian theology holds that the human race was seriously affected by the fall, but that man was not left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. Every sinner still has the ability to repent and believe in the gospel. The eternal destiny of each person depends on how he uses this ability. One may either cooperate with God, or choose to reject God, but the choice is up to the individual.

Calvinism vehemently disagrees with Arminianism at this point. The Reformed Christian avers that the fall of man has left all persons in a state of total depravity or inability. Man is incapable of doing anything that pleases God. He is dead in sin: spiritually blind and deaf to the things of God. Apart from the regenerative work of God in man’s life, in which he does not participate one iota, no one will ever repent and believe the gospel. The Westminster Confession of Faith states this well when it says:

Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: so as, a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.⁶

It is important to note that the Calvinist does not say that man is absolutely depraved; that is, that every man is as wicked as he can possibly be. This hyper-Calvinistic false teaching is sometimes wrongly attributed to Reformed theology.

As stated above, what the Calvinist does say is that sin has affected every part of man's being (all of his faculties, e.g., the mind, the will), to the point where he is unable to do anything pleasing to God. Man is capable of doing many *seemingly* good works. He can give to charities, he can help others in need, etc., but he does not ever seek to do anything to the glory of his Creator. Thus, all that he does is sinful. To quote another of the historical creeds of the church, The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England states that all works done by unregenerate men are:

not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ; neither do they make men meet to receive grace ... yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.⁷

Neither does Calvinism teach that fallen man has lost his freedom of the will, in the sense of free moral agency. The Reformed Christian holds that all men are free in this regard; they always do that which they choose to do (in actuality, they cannot do otherwise). To maintain that man does not have free moral agency would be to allege that he could never make a choice about anything at all. That would be absurd.

The problem is that fallen man does not have a neutral will. He is conceived dead in sin. That is, even though man is born with the freedom to choose what he so desires, he no longer has the ability to choose good (righteousness). His every desire is to do evil in the sight of God.

Man's will is, therefore, not autonomous and undetermined. It is always determined by its desires, its inward dispositions. The desire of Christian man, with his regenerate heart, is to do the will of



SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Notes

MEN ARE BORN IN SIN.

John 3:5–7

Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”

MEN ARE SPIRITUALLY DEAD IN SIN.

Genesis 6:5

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 8:21

And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.”

Ecclesiastes 9:3

This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?

Mark 7:21–23

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.

John 3:19

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Romans 8:7, 8

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

1 Corinthians 2:14

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Titus 1:15

To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.

MEN ARE SLAVES TO SIN.

John 8:34

Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin."

John 8:44

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

Romans 6:20

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

Ephesians 2:1, 2

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, ac-



QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. What is the first sin recorded in the Bible?

2. What effect did the first sin have on the rest of mankind?

3. Why is the first sin called “original”? Why is it a legal issue?

4. What is the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism on the issue of “the total depravity of man”?

5. Can man as a sinner do good works unto his own salvation?

6. What is meant by the phrase “bondage of the will” or “the will of man is in slavery to sin”?
