

The Other Side of Calvinism

The Complete Preface

The philosophical speculations of Calvinism, although they have been debated for hundreds of years, have masqueraded as sound Bible doctrine for much too long. The resultant theological implications, under pretense of orthodoxy, have been the dominant influence in all facets of theology. They have been accepted as authoritative, but only to the detriment of the Scriptures. The subject of Calvinism has also been fiercely debated since the time of the Reformation more than any other topic. Unlike baptism, which was the main bone of contention between the Baptists and other groups, the bitter controversy about Calvinism has infected all the various denominations at one time or another. This leavening is part of the other side of Calvinism.

So why another work on Calvinism? Although there exists an abundance of material on the subject, the overwhelming majority is from the Reformed viewpoint, which is inherently Calvinistic. The Baptist contribution to the debate comes chiefly from the Calvinistic groups. This leaves a definite void as far as a balanced treatment of the issue is concerned. The result is a disproportionate, intimidating presentation of one side which is then equated with orthodoxy. So mainly because of the sheer volume of the supporting apparatus alone, Calvinism has established a foothold on theology. This is another facet of the other side of Calvinism.

The stream of books currently available in defense of Calvinism is seemingly without end. And although it was stated a century ago by a Calvinistic theologian that "much more has been published" in opposition to than in defense of Calvinism,¹ such is certainly not the case now. Regarding the material published opposing the Calvinistic system, whether in whole or in part, three types can be distinguished. Most of the available literature consists of small pamphlets that are inherently limited in their effectiveness.² There are also some small books available from a variety of viewpoints that provide some helpful information.³ Concerning what could be termed the major books against Calvinism, there are at present but a few.⁴ There still exists the need for a definitive work which addresses and sufficiently answers all of the philosophical speculations and theological implications of the other side of Calvinism.

A shortage of works against Calvinism is not an adequate reason to begin an undertaking of this magnitude unless there be an important underlying cause. The salient determinant is the tremendously damaging nature of the Calvinistic system. The doctrines of Calvinism, *if really believed and consistently practiced*, are detrimental to evangelism, personal soul winning, prayer, preaching, and practical Christianity in general. This is even unintentionally admitted by a Calvinistic Baptist: "The doctrines taught in the Bible relating to the sovereignty of God, referred to in religious circles as 'Calvinism,' also as 'the doctrines of grace,' are doctrines of the Book that are the occasion for many people 'choking' on the Word. The misuse and abuse of these doctrines will deaden and kill."⁵ Calvinism is therefore the greatest "Christian" heresy that has ever plagued the Church. This being the case, the thesis of this book is that Calvinism is not only Reformed doctrine, and therefore something that Baptists should not be connected with, but that it is *wrong* doctrine. But because of its controversial nature, there exists a tremendous ignorance of the true nature of Calvinism. Some schools deem the subject so controversial that they even forbid discussion of the subject.⁶ The long and manifold influence of Calvinism on all areas of theology necessitates this examination of the other side of Calvinism.

Because of its underlying thesis, this book is not written from a neutral perspective. But then again, neither is any book written by a Calvinist. One of the most popular Calvinistic authors, Loraine Boettner,

in his book on Calvinism, starts out thus: "The purpose of this book is to show that Calvinism is beyond all doubt the teaching of the Bible and of reason."⁷ Let me unequivocally assert that the purpose of *this* book is to show that Calvinism is beyond all doubt *not* the teaching of the Bible *nor* of reason. One Calvinist boldly proclaims: "The perspective from which I have written is decidedly Calvinistic. That is not an apology. It is a warning. I want the reader to know from the beginning what I hope to accomplish. I have written with an agenda."⁸ But if Calvinists can write with the express purpose of defending their views, then it stands to reason that their critics should be afforded this same privilege as well. Another Calvinist says: "It is our hope that the material contained in this survey will help to promote the spread of Calvinism and that many will thus be led to understand, to believe, and to propagate this Biblical system of doctrine."⁹ But contrariwise, it is my hope that the material contained in this survey will help to *prevent* the spread of Calvinism and that many will thus be led to understand, to *not* believe, and to *cease* to propagate this *anti*-biblical system of doctrine. Still another Calvinist claims that his book was "written in the hope that much of the abuse that is hurled at the Calvinistic system of theology will be withdrawn."¹⁰ But once again, this book was written in the hope that much of the abuse that is hurled at the Calvinistic system of theology will be *sustained*. And finally, another Calvinist states: "The purpose of this monograph is not to attack men personally. Rather, it is to protect the church from the heretical doctrines of anti-Calvinistic teachings."¹¹ Likewise, the purpose of this monograph is not to attack men personally. Rather, it is to protect the church from the heretical doctrines of *Calvinistic* teachings. So, although one Calvinist maintains that "the denial of Calvinism is a very grave mistake,"¹² it will be maintained throughout this work that the *acceptance* of Calvinism is a very grave mistake. This perspective is necessary in order to present the other side of Calvinism.

The first and only recourse, as well as the final authority for everything said herein, is of course the Holy Bible. Not only will the Bible be used to answer the philosophical speculations and theological implications of Calvinism, but it will be believed as written. And because they form such an intrinsic part of the book, most Scripture citations will be given in full. Since this is a biblical defense, the emphasis will be on what the Bible actually says, not what it has commonly been interpreted to teach. "The word of God is not bound" (2 Tim. 2:9) by the opinions of the Church Fathers, commentators, scholars, creeds, confessions, or any man's opinions or system of interpretation. Since only the Scripture is infallible, it is quite able to correct both the writer and reader, as well as the philosophical speculations and theological implications of the other side of Calvinism.

The structure of the book is rather straightforward and is naturally divided into two parts: a historical examination and a biblical analysis. The origin, development, and claims of Calvinism, as well as its namesake and chief antagonist, will be investigated in the light of history. Once this essential foundation is laid, the actual doctrines of Calvinism will be examined, both doctrinally and theologically, and analyzed in the light of Scripture by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Because of this logical format, a disparity in content will exist between the two parts as well as the individual chapters. But this is a necessary evil in order to preserve the unity of each subject and bring to light the even greater evil contained in the other side of Calvinism.

The format of the book is exactly as the Calvinists have desired. One Calvinist says: "It is high time that we open our hearts and minds to an honest appraisal of Calvin and Calvinism."¹³ Exactly. And the only way to make an honest appraisal of Calvin and Calvinism is to, in the words of another Calvinist, "let Calvinism speak for itself."¹⁴ Therefore, the amassing of statements by non-Calvinists against Calvinism as proof that Calvinism is false will not be found in this work. In order to let Calvinism speak for itself, the procedure to be followed will be a simple one, and one employed by the Calvinists themselves. Just as one Calvinist says he has quoted his opponents "at length that there might be no mistake about what they believe,"¹⁵ so the Calvinists themselves will be extensively and eclectically cited that there might be no mistake about what they believe. This is both to prevent the cry of misrepresentation and to demonstrate the numerous contradictions that exist among the Calvinists themselves. Anything that could possibly be damaging to Calvinism will be documented from Calvinist or neutral sources. All quotations, including the

use of bold, italics, and capitals, as well as spelling, grammar, and punctuation, appear exactly as in the original source. The bibliography is limited to works cited or mentioned and does not include all works consulted in this examination of the other side of Calvinism.

Readers of the first edition of this work (originally published in 1991) will notice that the same basic format and structure have been followed. Nevertheless, this is where the similarity between the two books ends. Although their basic thesis is the same, this edition is an entirely new work. Not only have the deficiencies of the first edition been corrected and some material omitted, but much new material has been added. Besides the original work being completely rewritten, the historical section has been greatly expanded with a much greater emphasis on primary sources. The reception of the first edition by the Calvinists was just as expected and predicated in the epilogue of that work. And since the literature espousing Calvinism did not suddenly cease with the publication of the first edition of this work, it was deemed necessary to significantly enhance this biblical defense against the philosophical speculations and theological implications of Calvinism: the other side of Calvinism.

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1. William Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), p. 313.
 2. Robert L. Sumner, *An Examination of Tulip* (Brownsburg: Biblical Evangelism, 1972); Peter S. Ruckman, *Hyper-Calvinism* (Pensacola: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1984); John R. Rice, *Hyper-Calvinism: a False Doctrine* (Murfreesboro: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1970); Curtis Hutson, *Why I Disagree With All Five Points of Calvinism* (Murfreesboro: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1980); James Moffat, *Predestination* (Lancaster: Charles W. Duty & Sons, n.d.); Donald A. Waite, *Calvin's Error of Limited Atonement* (Collingswood: The Bible For Today, 1978); Alger Fitch, *Pick the Brighter Tulip* (Joplin: College Press Publishing Co., 1993); L. S. Ballard, *Election Made Plain*, 2nd ed. (n.p., n.d.).
 3. J. R. Alexander, *The Tulip Doctrine* (Texarkana: Bogard Press, 1992); John R. Rice, *Predestinated for Hell? NO!* (Murfreesboro: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1958); Peter S. Ruckman, *Why I Am Not a Calvinist* (Pensacola: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1997); George L. Bryson, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Costa Mesa: The Word for Today, 1996); O. Glenn McKinley, *Where Two Creeds Meet* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1959); Max Younce, *Not Chosen to Salvation* (Madison: by the author, n.d.); James Wilkins, *Foreknowledge, Election, Predestination in the Light of Soul-Winning* (Mansfield: New Testament Ministries, 1985); Andrew Telford, *Subjects of Sovereignty* (Boca Raton: by the author, 1948); Robert P. Lightner, *The Death Christ Died* (Des Plains: Regular Baptist Press, 1967); Cornelius R. Stam, *Divine Election and Human Responsibility* (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1994).
 4. Archer C. Wilcox, *Messianic Credentials of Jesus the Christ* (Burlington: Crown Publications, 1986); Samuel Fisk, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom* (Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, 1973); Samuel Fisk, *Calvinistic Paths Retraced* (Murfreesboro: Biblical Evangelism Press, 1985); Clark H. Pinnock, ed., *The Grace of God, The Will of Man* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989); Clark H. Pinnock, ed., *Grace Unlimited* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1975); Kent Kelly, *Inside the Tulip Controversy* (Southern Pines: Calvary Press, 1986); Robert L. Shank, *Elect in the Son* (Springfield: Westcott Publishers, 1970); Robert L. Shank, *Life in the Son*, 2nd ed. (Springfield: Westcott Publishers, 1961); Roger T. Forster and V. Paul Marston, *God's Strategy in Human History* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1974); William W. Klein, *The New Chosen People* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990).
 5. Bob L. Ross, *The Killing Effects of Calvinism* (Pasadena: Pilgrim Publications, n.d.), p. 1.
 6. Ohio Baptist College, *1992/1994 Catalog*, p. 8; Norris Bible Baptist Institute, *1985/1986 Catalog*, p. 33.
 7. Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1932), p. 1.
 8. C. Samuel Storms, *Chosen for Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), p. 11.
 9. David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1963), p. 10.

10. W. J. Seaton, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), p. 5.
11. Kenneth G. Talbot and W. Gary Crampton, *Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism* (Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books, 1990), p. 5.
12. John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* (Brentwood: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Publishers, 1991), p. 107.
13. Bastian Kruithof, *The High Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), p. vii.
14. David J. Engelsma, *A Defense of Calvinism as the Gospel* (South Holland: The Evangelism Committee, Protestant Reformed Church, n.d.), p. 18.
15. Storms, *Chosen for Life*, p. 22.
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