

Introduction To Calvinism

Introduction. There is no system of doctrine that exceeds Calvinism in its pervasive effect upon men who call upon the name of Christ. Yet few really know what Calvinism really teaches, and fewer still know how to answer its teachings.

Since the Reformation, Calvinism has remained the foundation of virtually all denominational doctrines. Even though the doctrinal system has been adapted and modified, over the last few decades there has been a resurgence of Calvinism. Some Christians also have accepted at least some of the tenets of this doctrine.

When the Protestant Reformation occurred, many of the doctrines of Catholicism were brought over to the new denominations being formed. Most of the early reformers were not trying to birth "new" churches. They were attempting to "reform" the Catholic Church by correcting errors which they believed had crept into the church. Such was true of the early work of John Calvin who made an attempt to bring Catholicism back to the old Augustinian principles emphasizing the sovereignty of God which he felt had been abandoned. Needless to say, he was rejected and had to flee for his life. Though his work was not received by the Catholic Church, it has been indelibly stamped into the religious thought of the denominational world.

I. **Historical Review**

A. Augustine.

1. Birth and boyhood.

- a) Aurelius Augustine was born of a heathen father and a Christian mother (relatively speaking) on November 13th, 354 at Tagaste, a small municipality in Africa. He was taught the principles of the New Testament from early childhood. His parents made great sacrifices that he might obtain a liberal education.
- b) He was an eager lad to learn and had a great thirst for knowledge. His reading was confined almost exclusively to Latin authors. He knew a few Greek writers by reading the Latin translations. At the age of eighteen he read Cicero's *Hortensius* and was so influenced by the reading that he decided to devote his entire life to the pursuit of knowledge.

2. Early training and influences.

- a) Augustine was trained to be a teacher and a philosopher, and he practiced this profession at Tagaste, Carthage, Rome and Milan. His mother trained him in the Catholic faith, but she, following the wisdom of the day, would not baptize him while he was a boy lest the virtue of baptism be destroyed by the lusts of youth.
- b) His mother was a pious woman, and her affection was very real,

but she was motivated by worldly motives where her son was concerned. For example, when with a tardy sense of justice he wanted to marry his mistress, the mother of his son with whom he had been living for years, it was his mother that objected on the grounds that the marriage would interfere with his prospects and it was she who found him a wealthier fiancée.

3. The Manichaeans.

- a) As a young man Augustine found the teachings of the Manichaeans compatible with his interests and desires. They taught that there were two everlasting kingdoms, one of light under God, and the other of darkness under the Devil.
- b) The substance of their doctrine bears a great resemblance to Gnosticism. One of the underlying themes is the concept of the defiling nature of the physical. One can see this theme in Gnosticism, Manichaeism and Calvinism. There was also the idea in Manichaeism that God sent Christ and the Comforter (Mani, the founder of Manichaeism) to enlighten men. Some think that Augustine may have carried this idea with him also, an idea which found expression in the doctrine that men cannot perceive divine truth until enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

4. Augustine's conversion.

- a) Augustine became a member of the sect, and for nine years was a zealous adherent and a stout champion. Gradually he broke from this group and fell more under the influence of the Neoplatonists. The teachings of Manichaeism were grossly incompatible with Christianity. He found Neoplatonism much more compatible with Christianity. Yet there were certain basic ideas common to both.
- b) For example, Neoplatonism stated that there was a dualism between the material and the ideal, and that matter defiled the ideal. Neoplatonism also included the belief in immateriality and immortality of the soul and in man's possession of a spiritual sense by which he may know God and the realities of the unseen world. Augustine was baptized by Ambrose, bishop of Milan, in the spring of A.D. 381.

5. The sources of Augustine's thinking.

- a) One fact that shouts at an unbiased reader of Augustine's writings is that he came to his "Christian" beliefs through the back door. Augustine did not take his Bible in hand, read it and come up with his convictions. He was steeped in the writings of the Roman writer Cicero, in the complex yarns of the Manichaeans and in the philosophical thoughts of Neoplatonism.
- b) When he studied God, man, evil and anything else, he did it with

all this excess baggage in his mind. He first felt the need to square these thoughts with the philosophical principles he was already committed to. Such study of the scriptures is guaranteed to result in half-baked theories that incorporate more of men than God. The longer Augustine was a "Christian," the more he moved in the direction of the Bible and away from his philosophy. His Neoplatonism, however, had a lifelong influence over his thinking.

6. The definition and origin of evil.
 - a) To Augustine, evil was the absence of good. Since God is eternal and cannot be changed, He is the ultimate good. Any movement away from God is a movement toward evil. Augustine and a host of others, including Calvin, wrestled with the question, "Why should there be evil in a universe created out of nothing by a Being who is both good and all-powerful?"
 - b) In his work, *City of God*, Augustine explained evil as the tendency of all created things to lapse again into the nothingness from which they came. It was the same principle that explained the evil will of man. They also are created from nothing, and they tend to lapse into nothingness. This tendency reveals itself in their tendency to choose the less instead of the greater, the choice of self rather than God, which is the essence of all sin.
 - c) Augustine did not believe God to be responsible for sin, but that He permitted it for the sake of the greater good. Calvin, on the other hand, taught that God predestined sin. This teaching posed a problem for both Augustine and Calvin, and neither one ever resolved it.
7. Original sin or total hereditary depravity.
 - a) Though Augustine did not believe God to be responsible for sin, and though he did not need the fall of Adam to explain the universality of sin, still, under the influence of Catholic tradition, Augustine accepted the doctrine of original sin and used it to explain the sins of Adam's descendants. The result was inconsistency.
 - b) Augustine had taught that Adam was created by God, and his spirit and his flesh was good, not bad. His sin was due to pride, because he put himself before God and did not have complete dependence on him. Adam tended to lapse into nothingness, and chose the lesser rather than the greater good. Adam's nature was originally good, but it was corrupted by the fall. Adam, in turn, transmitted to his descendants this corrupt nature which became the incentive to sin. Thus, for Adam's descendants the process was reversed. With Adam the choice of evil, that is of

self instead of God, resulted in an evil nature; with them the evil nature with which they were born resulted in the choice of evil.

8. Free will.

- a) Men inherited from Adam a corrupt nature and this became the incentive to sin. Augustine argued extensively that men are endowed with free will and that the freedom of man's will is not limited by God's foreknowledge.
- b) But he taught there is one thing he cannot do -- he cannot choose God and live for Him without divine help or grace. Grace had long been understood in two senses: one was the kindness and favor of God as shown in salvation, and the other was something bestowed upon men, something objective.

9. Irresistible grace.

- a) Augustine taught that faith is a divine gift; no one can believe in God unless moved by His grace. Augustine believed that these gifts were bestowed without regard to human merit either actual or foreseen.
- b) Augustine went further and declared God's grace to be irresistible. Those whom God wills to save cannot prevent Him from doing so even if they wished to. Try reconciling Augustine's insistence that the will of man is free with this quotation: "For even with the very wills of men He does what He will, when He will."

10. The sovereignty of God.

- a) The basis of this view was his concept of God as absolutely supreme, what Calvin and the Reformers called the sovereignty of God. The natural conclusion might be that if God is the only real being, His will is the only real will, and that therefore, we mortals have no will of our own.
- b) Whereas Calvin accepted this conclusion, Augustine did not. The reason why he did not was it would make God the author of sin. As we noted, Calvin, Zwingli and others accepted this conclusion and its consequences.

11. Predestination.

- a) Upon his doctrine of God as absolute "will" rested his famous doctrine of double predestination, or the foreordaining of some to salvation and some to damnation. Augustine referred to the wicked as being left wholly to themselves. In other words, sometimes he refers to God choosing the elect and just sort of abandoning the wicked without actually foreordaining them to be lost.
- b) But occasionally he goes further and refers to God foreordaining some men to punishment as well as some to salvation. Some are saved and others lost -- which is due wholly to God's secret

“will,” which we are unable to fathom.

12. The perseverance of the saints.

- a) He also taught that God gives to the chosen the gift of perseverance so they may endure to the end. None of the elect can permanently fall away and be lost. The Reformers taught that the faith and life of the elect was evidence that he was elect. Augustine thought such confidence was dangerous.
- b) He also taught that a believer could abandon the faith and be lost. This teaching also involved him in inconsistency because he taught that faith was produced by the grace of God, yet the non-elect might be a believer, and might fall away. Therefore the grace of God might work in the non-elect, and yet he be lost.

13. The number of the elect is fixed.

- a) Augustine believed that the number of the elect is unchangeably fixed and is the same as the number of the fallen angels. The number is fixed and can neither be increased nor diminished. He attempted to prove this by a statement in the book of Revelation: “Hold fast that thou hast, lest another take thy crown.” For if another is not to receive unless one has lost, the number must be fixed.
- b) McGiffert, in his *A History of Christian Thought*, concluded, “The curious combination in all this (in Augustine’s doctrine of God and man and sin and grace) of mystical piety, Neoplatonic philosophy, Manichaeism, Christian tradition, strained exegesis, rigorous logic and glaring inconsistencies born of religious instincts and moral needs, can hardly be matched anywhere else in the history of human thought.”

14. Augustine, like so many of his day, did not have an upbringing as a Christian. He was not filled with the knowledge of the Bible itself from the earliest infancy. He practiced a life of immorality in living with a woman with whom he had a child, whom he abandoned to marry another. He was acquainted with Cicero and other writers and philosophers of his day far more than the writers of the Bible. His love was learning and philosophy. As he approached religion, his main concern was to fit it into molds created by his philosophical questions and whatever philosophy appealed to him at the time, whether Manichaeism or Neoplatonism.

B. John Calvin.

1. His birth and early life.

- a) John Calvin was born at Noyon, France in the province of Picardy on July 10th, 1509. Calvin was born the second son of Gerard Chauvin [Calvin], a notary at Noyon. His mother died very early, and his father, who did not care for children, sent him to the

home of an aristocratic friend to be reared. It is thought that it was from this environment that Calvin acquired his distinguished manners and a somewhat lofty demeanor.

- b) His father managed to obtain a number of benefices [scholarships] for his son, the earliest being when John was six years old. When he was about fourteen, Calvin's father obtained a benefice for him to go to Paris for some years. At the University of Paris, he obtained the nickname, "The Accusative Case," because of his critical, fault-finding attitude. He died May 27th, 1564 at Geneva in the arms of his dear friend Theodore Beza.
2. His education and intellectual development.
 - a) At his father's wish, he changed his studies from theology to law. For a time he studied at Orleans and Bourges. At Orleans, he came under the influence of some Protestants.
 - b) After his father's death in 1531, he devoted himself to the studies of the humanities. His first work was a commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia*. In this work one sees evidence of wide reading, excellent Latin style and Calvin's interests in morality.
 3. Calvin's conversion.
 - a) It was through the influence of the humanists Erasmus and Lefevre that Calvin was led to the study of the Bible and of Luther's writings. Probably in the fall of 1533 he experienced a "conversion" such as many have told about at the beginning of a religious career.
 - b) He said that a sudden beam of light came to him from God showing him how deep he was in error. He promptly abandoned his former life with tears.
 4. The *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.
 - a) Toward the end of the year 1534, Calvin left France because of growing persecution. After various wanderings he reached Basle, where he published the first edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.
 - b) In years to come, the *Institutes* were revised and enlarged until the final edition in 1559 (Preserved Smith, *The Age of the Reformation*, 1920, p.162).
 5. His first visit to Geneva, Switzerland.
 - a) In August, 1536 Calvin came to Geneva. He was invited by certain other Reformers (William Farel, Viret and others) to become a promoter of the cause. He became a preacher and a lecturer on divinity.
 - b) As the principles espoused by Calvin and Farel were impressed upon the city, its citizens decided they were not quite ready for them, and they expelled Farel and Calvin.

6. The established theocracy in Geneva.
 - a) In 1541 Calvin was recalled to Geneva. There his position became so strong that he remade Geneva into a city after his own heart. Virtually every breath and every heartbeat of its citizens was controlled by Calvin.
 - b) Calvin was guilty of inflicting horrible tortures on those who opposed him. The most notorious case of this was Servetus, against whom Calvin served as prosecutor. Servetus was condemned to death by slow burning. Calvin claimed to have sought to change the form of execution, but there is not a shred of evidence to show this, either in the minutes of the trial or elsewhere. He also accused a number of his opponents of treason and put them on the rack to obtain proof of his accusations.
 - c) To be fair, it should be pointed out that the Protestants were only following the age-old example of Catholics in using civil power to enforce spiritual principles. Calvin ruled with an iron hand until his death.
7. His work and personal habits.
 - a) The amount of work Calvin did is astounding. He ruled himself with an iron will and he never allowed physical considerations to play any part in what he did. For years he was so sparing in his food that he ate one meal a day.
 - b) He presided over the ecclesiastical and political affairs of Geneva; he preached every day, lectured three times per week, carried on a vast correspondence and continued his voluminous literary labors. Besides his printed works, there are now in the library of Geneva 2025 sermons in manuscript. He chose to be poor and died with very few possessions. He was a brilliant, dedicated and apparently a sincere man.
8. The sources of the *Institutes*.
 - a) His greatest work was a summation of the various principles that were floating around in the early Reformation period. He organized these principles into a tightly-knit logical system. Throughout his work he refers often to the works of Augustine, and anyone who is familiar with Augustine cannot fail to see the debt Calvin owed to him.
 - b) Preserved Smith wrote, "First and foremost he was dependent upon Luther, and to an extent that cannot be exaggerated. Calvin drew all his principle doctrines from the *Catechisms*, the *Bondage of the Will* and the *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. He also borrowed something from Bucer, Erasmus and Schwenckfeld, as well as from three writers who were in some sense his models: Melancthon's *Commonplaces of Theology*,

Zwingli's *True and False Religion*, and Farel's *Brief Instruction in Christian Faith* had all done tentatively what he now did finally."

9. Though Calvin was much more Biblically oriented than Augustine was, it is obvious that his Institutes are merely a rehash of Augustine's doctrines. There are glaring inconsistencies in Calvin's theology, inconsistencies that he did not enjoy dealing with, such as the problem of how God could foreordain sin and then blame men with it. In fact, Calvin's work was theologically oriented. In other words, he had a theological system in mind, and he went to the Bible to prove it, no matter what.

II. **Impact On Denominational Doctrine**

- A. The doctrines of all religions that are strictly based on Calvinism can be referred to as "pure Calvinists." However, it is frustrating to see many different denominations accepting portions of Calvinism. For example, limited atonement is currently not held by most denominations, but the consequences of that teaching are held. At least a pure Calvinist is consistent!
- B. In addition, such doctrines as infant baptism, the direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of the sinner in conversion, the first and second works of grace, the experience by which one knows whether he is elect or not, the impossibility of apostasy, the idea that you cannot understand the Bible, whatever will be will be, the imputed righteousness of Christ and many other ideas are from the teachings of John Calvin.

III. **A Brief Analysis Of Calvinism**

- A. Total hereditary depravity.
 1. Calvin wastes no time in his writings getting to his subject. On page one of his first book, he writes, "In particular, the miserable ruin into which the revolt of the first man has plunged us, compels us to turn our eyes upwards." In the second chapter of his first book he refers to men, "in themselves lost and under curse." This theme is very prominent as he talks about the necessity of knowing God, because his point is that we cannot know God fully without the Holy Spirit's operation upon our mind. The reason why even the elect cannot respond to God on his own is his total depravity inherited from Adam.
 2. The Westminster Confession of Faith states concerning total depravity or total inability, "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 good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to

prepare himself" (Chapter IX, section iii). It is therefore this total depravity that makes the irresistible grace of God necessary.

B. Unconditional election.

1. The doctrine of unconditional election is only an extension of the general doctrine of predestination as it relates to the salvation of sinners. According to Calvin, in Romans 11:6, "Paul clearly declares that it is only when the salvation of a remnant is ascribed to gratuitous election, we arrive at the knowledge that God saves whom He wills of His mere good pleasure, and does not pay a debt, a debt which never can be due" (Book 3, chapter 21).
2. Calvin carefully sets forth his teaching as follows: "By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death" (Book 3, chapter 21). One can see that if the sovereign God predetermines everything, then He also determines who will be saved and lost.

C. Limited atonement.

1. It is not as easy to produce clear statements of Calvin as it concerns the doctrine of limited atonement. His followers argue among themselves whether he believed in general redemption. Nevertheless, it is a consequence of doctrines he does teach.
2. In the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) the following statement was set forth on the subject: "This death of the Son of God is a single and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sins, of infinite value and price, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world; but because many who are called by the Gospel do not repent, nor believe in Christ, but perish in unbelief; this doth not arise from defect or insufficiency of the sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross, but from their own fault. God willed that Christ, through the blood of the cross, should out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, efficaciously redeem all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father; that he should confer on them the gift of faith." McClintock and Strong also state, "That Christ's atonement was sufficient for all, that it is actually applied only to the elect, and that it enhances the guilt of those who reject it, is now almost universally conceded by the different schools" (Vol. II, p. 46).

D. Irresistible grace.

1. This doctrine is not directly referred to as "irresistible grace" in the *Institutes*, but the idea is clearly set forth. "God, however, teaches

his elect effectually when he brings them to faith" (Book 3, chapter 24). Calvin quotes Augustine, allowing him to word this point for him: "What means, 'Everyone that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me,' but just that 'there is no one who hears and learns of the Father that does not come to me'? For if every one who has heard and learned, comes; assuredly every one who does not come, has neither heard nor learned of the Father; for if he had heard and learned, he would come" (Book 3, chapter 24). Calvin continues to quote Augustine to the effect that the reason why God's grace is irresistible, or utterly effectual, is that "it is not received by any hard heart; for the reason for which it is given is, that the hardness of the heart may first be taken away" (*Institutes*, Book 3, chapter 24).

2. Since it is God who decides who will be saved and who will be lost, it is God who reaches out to His chosen. He sends His Spirit into the hard heart, "takes away the stony heart, and gives a heart of flesh." Thus everyone of the elect is saved wholly by the choice and the work of God.

E. Perseverance of the saints.

1. The Westminster Confession expresses the doctrine as the follows: "They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein, to the end, and be eternally saved" (Chapter XVII, Section 1). In other words, all who become true Christians cannot totally fall away and be lost -- that while they sin temporarily, they will eventually be saved.
2. Note these two quotations from the *Institutes*. Once again we find Calvin quoting Augustine who says that "the original freedom of man was to be able not to sin, but that we have a much greater freedom -- viz. not to be able to sin." He quotes him again saying, "Therefore, to meet the infirmity of the human will, and prevent it from failing, how weak soever it might be, divine grace was made to act on it inseparably and uninterruptedly" (Book 2, chapter 3). One can see from this quotation why many times certain denominationalists have ridiculed the prayers of those who ask God to forgive them their sins.

- F. These points of doctrine were not originated by Calvin but merely systematized, arranged and developed by him. He borrowed frequently from Augustine, and Augustine had borrowed from Ambrose and other "church fathers." No doubt the "fathers" were influenced by the Gnostic heresy and even by the old Persian concepts of matter being inherently evil within itself.

1. Calvin built his system upon the foundation laid by the earlier reformers, especially Luther and Bucer, but his peculiar gifts of learning, logic and style made him preeminently the outstanding theologian of the Reformed movement.
2. Underlying the whole system was the dominant thought of the infinite and transcendent sovereignty of God, to know whom is man's supreme end.

IV. **Two Related Foundations Of Calvinism**

A. The sovereignty of God.

1. This point is integrally related to the idea of unconditional election. Although Calvin begins his *Institutes* with an involved study of the knowledge of God, the logical beginning point of his doctrine is the sovereignty of God. A couple of quotes will illustrate what Calvin taught about this subject.
 - a) "But whoso has learned from the mouth of Christ that all the hairs of his head are numbered (Matthew 10:30), will look farther for the cause, and hold that all events whatsoever are governed by the secret counsel of God" (Book 1, chapter 16).
 - b) "The thing to be proved, therefore, is that single events are so regulated by God, and all events so proceed from his determinate counsel, that nothing happens fortuitously" (Book 1, chapter 16).
 - c) "It will, therefore, be proper here to advert to the end which Scripture has in view in teaching that all things are divinely ordained" (Book 1, chapter 17).
2. The sovereignty of God, in Calvin's teachings, is necessarily and inextricably connected with his teaching on predestination. From these quotations it is clear that Calvin's view was that God has ordained everything that happens, no matter how small (1 Samuel 2:6-10; Job 9:12). According to Calvin, since God has total rule, His will is supreme, and according to that will He ordained that sin would occur, since by this sin, His own holiness would be enhanced.
3. Further, He ordained that of those lost He would save a certain number. These are the elect, and they are chosen by God's sovereign will completely apart from any quality they have, or any merit on their part.
4. God's power to rule is not in question; nor is His power to choose what He will (2 Chronicles 20:6; Psalm 115:3; Isaiah 45:9; Jeremiah 18:6). He has complete power and has exercised that power. The question is does His sovereignty require Him to make all decisions and to predetermine everything? Let's note some consequences of this doctrine.

- a) God foreordained Adam to sin and then condemned him for it when he could not have avoided it no matter what he did. Basically the way Calvin answers this is that we should not be ugly and question what God does. This is really all he can say, because he will not back down from his position that God has predetermined all things, and therefore there is no avoiding this conclusion.
 - b) Man has no real choice in any thing. Calvin affirms that things appear to us to happen fortuitously, and we appear to have choice, but in reality, it was all chosen by God in eternity.
5. God can exercise His will and still allow man the exercise of his will.
- a) Examples of God's willingness to react to our decisions.
 - (1) Nineveh and Jonah (Jonah 3:4-10).
 - (2) Hezekiah's impending death (Isaiah 38:15; 2 Kings 20:15).
 - b) Calvin's answer to these arguments is that these were not really God's plans; they were threats given to bring about reformation.
 - c) Passages that indicate that God can change His mind.
 - (1) God repented of having made the earth (Genesis 6:6).
 - (2) God repented of having made Saul king (1 Samuel 15:11).
 - (3) God would repent of the calamity He thought to do to His people as soon as He could see any sign of reformation in them (Jeremiah 18:8).
 - (4) Calvin's answer to these points:
 - (a) "As to repentance, we must hold that it can no more exist in God than ignorance, or error, or impotence. If no man knowingly or willingly reduces himself to the necessity of repentance, we cannot attribute repentance to God without saying either that he knows not what is to happen, or that he cannot evade it, or that he rushes precipitately and inconsiderately into a resolution, and then forthwith regrets it" (*Institutes*, Book 1, chapter 17).
 - (b) Then he cites verses that say God does not repent as men do (1 Samuel 15:29; Numbers 23:19).
 - (c) Finally he says that to use "repentance" of God is merely accommodative language and compares it to using "angry" of God and then thinking of His anger in human terms.
 - (5) Additional passages that must be reconciled with the idea that God's sovereignty permits men to make choices also (Acts 2:23; 4:28).
 - d) Passages that indicate that God's sovereign will is that men should be able to choose what they will do and be (Joshua

24:14-15; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9).

6. The main point to be emphasized in the study of God's sovereignty is whether God is able to be sovereign and allow anyone to make subordinate decisions. It is perfectly in keeping with Bible teaching that God can be sovereign and still allow men a choice in their destiny.

B. Predestination.

1. One of the basic doctrines of Calvinism is the predestination or foreordination of individuals to reward and punishment. The idea is that God before the earth was formed, with no regard to the will of man, predestinated certain people to eternal life and other to eternal damnation.
2. The great proof texts of the Calvinist for this doctrine are Ephesians 1:4-5, 11, Romans 8:29-30 and Acts 13:48. The conclusion drawn from these passages by John Calvin, and by Augustine centuries before him, that God arbitrarily elected certain individuals to salvation and condemned all others is entirely wrong.
3. There is certainly a type of predestination is taught in these verses, but not the Calvinistic kind.
 - a) The KJV uses the word "predestinate" in Ephesians 1:5, 11 and Romans 8:29-30.
 - b) The ASV uses the word "foreordain." They mean essentially the same, "To set out beforehand, to ordain before."
4. Before we enter into an explanation of the proof texts, we need to set forth some basic divine principles that must guide our understanding of the foreordination passages.
 - a) God gives man the freedom of choice.
 - (1) God gave Adam and Eve the freedom of choice (Genesis 2:16-17).
 - (2) The choice was plain: obey and live or disobey and die.
 - (3) They chose through their own will and the tempting of Satan to disobey.
 - (4) Who is willing to say that since God foreknew the outcome, He forced or foreordained Adam and Eve to sin (James 1:13-14)?
 - (5) We, too, are given a choice (Joshua 24:15).
 - (a) Men likewise today need to make a choice as to which God they will serve -- whether the god of wealth, pleasure, popularity, worldly wisdom or the one true God.
 - (b) Mary chose that good part which would not be taken away (Luke 10:42). The psalmist had chosen the way of truth (Psalm 119:30).
 - b) God is no respecter of persons.

- (1) This is expressly stated in the Bible (2 Chronicles 19:7; 1 Peter 1:17).
 - (2) Why then did God bestow special favor on some?
 - (a) God had respect to Abel (Genesis 4:4-5). Were Cain and Abel predestinated to good or evil? No, Abel acted by faith (Hebrews 11:4).
 - (b) Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8). The next verse shows why.
 - (3) God has respect for the character of man, not the person of man.
 - (a) God has respect to the humble (Psalm 138:6).
 - (b) Those who fear Him and work righteousness are accepted (Acts 10:34-35).
 - (c) Those who obey the truth will be rewarded (Romans 2:6-11).
 - (4) God has not exempted anyone from the opportunity to obtain eternal life (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). God does not show respect to anyone separate and apart from their actions.
- c) Salvation is not wholly dependent on God.
- (1) The origin of salvation is dependent on God (Ephesians 2:4-5). There was nothing that man did that caused God to plan to give His grace (Titus 3:5).
 - (2) The reception of salvation is dependent on man. The reception of salvation comes through meeting the conditions that God provided through His grace.
 - (3) Some think that the grace of God and works are incompatible. On the contrary, salvation is both by grace and works.
 - (4) God placed on man the responsibility of obtaining the salvation which He foreordained or predestinated.
 - (a) God foreordained the gospel (1 Corinthians 2:7-8; 2 Timothy 1:9-10). Man must obey the gospel to receive the benefits of it (1 Peter 4:17).
 - (b) God predestinated that Christ would die for man (1 Peter 1:19-20; Revelation 13:8). Man must obey Christ to receive His blessings (Hebrews 5:9).
 - (c) God foreordained that redemption would be in Christ, but man must put on Christ (Ephesians 1:4-7; Galatians 3:26-27).
 - (d) The church was predestinated, but one must be baptized into the church to be part of it (Ephesians 3:9-11; 1 Corinthians 12:13).
 - (5) God's grace is extended in providing these things. However,

in every case man must respond to receive the benefits. Nowhere does the Bible teach that God saves or condemns someone against his will or apart from his will; rather, it takes an exercise of his will.

d) Proof texts examined.

(1) Ephesians 1:4-5, 11.

(a) The Calvinist says this teaches that certain individuals are predestinated and others are not. They claim that if one was not of those predestinated, he is eternally damned and there is nothing he can do about it.

(b) However, it is a particular group or class of people that God chose before He made the world. It is those "in him," that is, those "in Christ."

(c) God predestinated the outcome before the beginning (Romans 9:22-24). From Ephesians 1, God predestinated before He made the world that He would choose those "in Christ." It is up to us to be of those "in Christ."

(2) Romans 8:29-30.

(a) This passage is a statement of God's entire purpose.

i) God has often spoken of things that were not as though they were (Romans 4:17). God is speaking of His entire plan in this fashion.

ii) Those whom He foreknew are the ones He predestinated. The ones He predestinated are the ones He called. The ones He called are the ones He justified and the ones He justified are the ones that He will eventually glorify.

iii) Again, it is the class or group which He foreknew, predestinated, called, etc., and not a random selection of certain individuals. He calls by the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

iv) This class that He predestinated constituted the called or the elect.

(1) Some misunderstand the thought of the "elect."

They think that if one is not of the "elect," he is just out of luck, is eternally damned, and there is nothing he can do about it.

(2) It is not an arbitrary election, but an election upon certain conditions. The election is through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience (1 Peter 1:2).

(b) Some get confused on the thought that God foreknows. The fact that God foreknows in no wise means that He causes them to happen.

- i) He foreknew the fall of man and made preparation for it, but did not cause Adam and Eve to sin.
 - ii) He purposed and planned the church before the world, yet did not force some into it and bar others from it.
 - iii) He foretold of one to betray Jesus (Zechariah 11:12-13), but did not make Judas betray the Lord. Judas himself allowed Satan to enter his heart (Luke 22:3).
 - iv) Some think that since God knows, there is nothing they can do. God knows that some are foolish enough to accept the doctrine of predestination. The thing that will cause them to be lost is not because God foreknew, but because they were foolish enough to accept it.
- (3) Acts 13:48.
 - (a) He does not say in this verse that as many as were ordained to eternal life were given eternal life apart from their own will.
 - (b) Belief is made a condition. Thus, as many as were predestinated, put on Christ or met the conditions were saved.
 - (c) The KJV word "ordained" means "to arrange in an orderly manner, i.e. assign or dispose (to a certain position or lot)."
 - i) As many as were set (disposed, determined) to eternal life believed.
 - ii) They were inclined (had interest in) to eternal life and thus believed.
- e) There are certain important divine principles that must guide our understanding of the predestination passages.
 - (1) God created man with choice-making ability. Man is a free moral agent.
 - (2) God does not respect the person but of the character of man.
 - (3) The origin of salvation came solely through the grace of God. The reception of salvation comes through meeting the conditions which God provided through His grace.
- f) The predestination of God deals not with specified individuals, but with a particular group of individuals -- those "in Christ." Anyone can be part of that group (Revelation 22:17).
- g) These conditions must be met to receive the benefits of God's grace: hear (Romans 10:17), believe (Hebrews 11:6), repent (Acts 2:38), confess (Romans 10:9), be baptized (1 Peter 3:21) and endure to the end (Matthew 24:12-13).

Conclusion. Calvinism is a false doctrine which has caused immeasurable suffering and loss. Though false, in the hands of a staunch adherent, it can be powerfully argued. Nevertheless, the simple facts of scripture will show that this system of doctrine is indeed false.