

## General Comments

- These are my humble assessments and comments after reading John Calvin's Institutes. In brief, Calvin was solid on some doctrines, such as the Trinity concept. Calvin was also a very learned and intelligent man, but he was not perfect. Though, Calvin might have been off on some of his doctrinal positions like all fallible men, that does not invalidate all of his positions
- Calvin also seemed to be a product of his generation, a man of his time with entrenched Catholicism and Augustinian holdovers from his Catholic upbringing. For example, he believed infant baptism (pedobaptism) saves the children of Christian parents just as much as Jews saw that circumcision saved their children [Book 4, Chapter 16, Section 6 or 4.16.6]
- Calvin quoted Augustine extensively. Augustine is revered in the Roman Catholic Church, but Augustine interpreted difficult or prophetic passages of the Bible allegorically (e.g., Genesis 1-6 and Revelations). Calvin's Catholic holdovers, and his Augustinian views help explain why he seems off on many crucial and fundamental doctrines as compared to a typical Baptist approach
- Plus, Calvin's positions on many doctrines seem more opinionated and biased rather than accurately articulated and defended from opposing views. Instead of defending many of his positions he lambasted and belittled opposing positions by calling them "stupid arguments" or "intolerable blasphemy." Also, many of Calvin's positions seemed to have started from an entrenched or biased mindset, often times with esoteric or mystical emphasis (i.e., feelings-based). These esoteric positions will be elaborated on in subsequent pages
- **Doubletalk and contradictions.** Given enough pages to write sooner or later a fallible person is going to either contradict himself or come across as doubletalk. For example, did he or did he not believe in transubstantiation (Catholics believe that Christ's body and blood literally and physically become part of the communion bread and cup). If you read one paragraph [4.17.5], yes he does; but if you read another paragraph [4.17.31], no he does not. Calvin admitted he did not fully comprehend the true meaning of the communion ordinance
- **Hermeneutics.** We can find bible verses to support any conceivable doctrine imaginable from Pentecostalism, Calvinism, Arminianism, Catholicism, to infant baptism, soul sleep, and even space aliens. But sound hermeneutics (i.e., proper usage of principles of biblical interpretation and linguistics) help us determine true doctrine from false doctrine. Therefore, all of Calvin's positions can easily be examined in the light of sound hermeneutics to determine their worthiness

## Key Question

❓ **Predestination/Election.** Are we locked in to a predetermined destiny? As Calvin says, "everything is divinely ordained" (1.16.4) and "the minds and wills of men are controlled in such a way that they move precisely in the course God has determined" (1.16.8) – Does this make us unaccountable robots, or pawns in a celestial chess game?

**Answer 1:** What God has predetermined from ages past is the wicked will go to Hell, and the righteous will go to Heaven and be conformed to the image of Christ. True, God instilled each person's soul and body into a specific family and into a specific historical time slot to fully accomplish His own purpose, and God also gives each able person the responsibility to chose life or death. God is so omnipotent, sovereign and omniscient, He not only knew who would do what in life before the world began, but He could easily work with the numerous variables that could and would play out and still accomplish His will. That's how sovereign our God is.

**Example – Solomon's birth.** If David had controlled his lust, as God commands all of us to, Solomon should not have been born under the circumstances which occurred with David and Bathsheba, and Christ could have come through possibly another son of David or even through Bathsheba if her husband, Uria, had died by more natural means than by the murderous hand of David. As God told David through the prophet Nathan "...and if (what I gave you) had been too little, I would moreover have given unto you more things" (2Samuel 12:8).

BUT according to Calvin's teaching, King David had no choice, he was commanded by God to lust and sin, and thereby, eventually produce Solomon with his ill-gotten wife, Bathsheba

## A Few More Key Thoughts

- If God prefers to see the wicked repent then it stands to reason He made provisions for that to be possible
  - Also, if, as Calvin believes, our destiny is divinely ordained, then why are the elect known from the foundations of the world but not sealed from the foundations of the world? Ephesians 1:13 clearly conveys that believers are not sealed till they believe
- KJV    "...after that you believed (active aorist tense), you were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise"  
NAS    "...having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise"  
NIV    "...Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit"

More comments on significant passages from Calvin's institutes are provided in the following pages.

Rod O'Neil's Comments on John Calvin's Institutes

Book.Chap.Sect	Comments on Passage from The Institutes of John Calvin
1.4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ 'True godliness cannot be found anywhere' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Calvin never defines what 'true godliness' is. The Bible also never defines 'true godliness' but <b>does</b> adequately address godliness</li> <li>● The New Testament has numerous passages, for example in Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus and in 2Peter, enticing all believers to live godly lives and exhibit godliness in thought, word and deed</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1.6.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ 'God has given all mankind the same opportunity of seeing God's deity reflected in creation to bring the whole human race under the same condemnation' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This is true since God has put eternity into the hearts of all men (Ecclesiastes 3:11)</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ God added the light of His word to make Himself known in salvation, giving that privilege to the ones He sees fit to bring closer to Himself' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> But this "privilege" is available to all who chose to believe (see Romans 5:18; 10:12)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1.7.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ 'We can FEEL completely sure that God's word is true...we FEEL a divine energy' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This is an esoteric opinion, which is not based on Scripture</li> <li>● Mormons also believe in basing their faith on experiential feelings (Moroni 10:3,4), which is living by sight and not by substantiated faith</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ Calvin adds all the children of the renewed church 'will be taught by the Lord' (Isaiah 54:13); God bestows this privilege on His elect; and the "specially chosen" are ignorant and stupid until grafted in' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> If this were true the way Calvin explains it, then the non-elect have a reasonable excuse before God for their behavior and decisions since they are not "specifically chosen," and like the elect in their non-elect state, the non-elect are ignorant and stupid by means not within their ability to willfully control their thoughts, words and deeds</li> <li>● <b>Were the Elect once Non-Elect?</b> According to Romans 5:6-11 and 1Corinthians 6:9-11 – YES. Christ died for the ungodly sinners, enemies of God – the non-elect, of such were some of us</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1.9.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ The Spirit illumines His word to us; He allows us to see God's face with no risk of error' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This seems to violate the no private interpretation principle (2Peter 1:20)</li> <li>● Also, Mormons and other cults believe the same thing regarding their infallibility</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1.15.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ 'There can be no question that man consists of Body &amp; Soul', where soul equates to the spirit' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Scripture depicts man as having body, soul and spirit (1Thessalonians 5:23), though Scripture does not define the difference between soul and spirit</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1.15.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ 'God's image can be partially seen in the elect once they are born again' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> However, you cannot tell the difference between a backslider and a non-elect</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1.15.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ The soul consists of two (2) parts – the intellect and the will' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Calvin quotes Aristotle, a secular philosopher, on this concept</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1.15.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Adam fell because he had no firmness of purpose' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Calvin did not elaborate how he determined this</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ 'Those who believe man has a free will (Arminians) will hold to an indiscriminate mixture of inspired doctrine and philosophical opinion, and miss the truth in both' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> The same can be said of Calvin's doctrinal positions possessing an indiscriminate mixture of inspired doctrine and philosophical opinion</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1.16.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ God so overrules everything that nothing happens without His approval; Psalms 115:3 – God does whatever pleases Him. Philosophically, this means God is the primary agent because He is the origin and cause of all activity' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Then, philosophically, the non-elect would have an excuse against God</li> <li>● Also, according to Jesus (Matthew 11:23), if Sodom and Gomorrah had witnessed the miracles Jesus performed in Capernaum they would still be around – so they too would have an excuse</li> <li>● Also, since God gives us the ability to adjust our behavior so we can either shorten or lengthen our life spans and inherit either blessings or cursings, philosophically, this nullifies Calvin's statement without diminishing God's ability to do whatsoever pleases Him</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1.16.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ "Nothing happens by chance" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This is true – even the casting of the lot is in God's hand (Proverbs 16:33)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1.16.8a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ "...but we do not allow the term 'FATE'" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> However, God addresses fate in both the Old and New testaments, though the word "fate" is not used (see Numbers 16:9; Job 18:20; Ecclesiastes 2:14-15; 9:2-3; Luke 13:2)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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1.16.8b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ "...but also the minds and wills of men are controlled in such a way that they move precisely in the course he has destined"</li> <li>◆ <b>Response.</b> Then God destined the Jews to slip into bestiality and child sacrifice – sins which never entered into God's mind (Jeremiah 32:35) – Not that God wasn't omniscient enough to know what Israel would do, but He had no desire for Israel to go in that direction. And, philosophically (same argument Calvin uses), the Jews and all sinners would have an excuse since God destined them to sin</li> </ul>
1.17.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ "...everything is divinely ordained" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Again, if sin is ordained, then sinners have a legitimate excuse before God</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ "His purpose is either to develop patience in His people, correct their vices, control their impurity, accustom them to self-denial, and stir them from laziness; or it is to humble the proud, defeat the ungodly, and frustrate their scheming" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> And a lot more can be said about this, ultimately leading the Christian to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1.17.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin belittles his scoffers, but he does adequately address some of their "stupid arguments" regarding medicine and other precautions to extend life</li> </ul>
1.17.11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ God not only allows the Devil and evil men to conceive, plan and carry out any crime, but "commands it" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Calvin's position here clearly contradicts Scripture (e.g., Jeremiah 32:35 just to name one) and gives sinners a reasonable excuse for their behavior (Romans 1:20 – "...they are without excuse") - Jeremiah 32:35 "(child sacrifices)...which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination..."</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.1.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin considered any opposing thoughts as "intolerable blasphemy" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Calvin elevated his doctrinal position as unquestionable, which is what cults do</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ We are condemned from the womb <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This statement is true (Romans 5:18)</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ Calvin states "it would be ridiculous to make God the author of death" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> But in 1.16.3 Calvin states God is the primary agent because He is the origin and cause of all activity; and in 1.17.1 "everything is divinely ordained"; plus 1.17.11 conveys that God commands the Devil and evil men to carry out any crime; So philosophically, God is the author of death</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ "The whole man is in himself nothing but LUST" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This statement is true to some degree, but it should be noted the core sin of Sodom was not their lust but their PRIDE (Ezekiel 16:49)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.2.12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin believed like Augustine that man's innate abilities to grasp the things of God were corrupted by the fall "but became so bound by depraved lusts as to be incapable of worthy desires" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Actually, we cannot even lust without God giving us the ability to lust; so this is on par with God giving us the ability to have worthy desires</li> <li>● Even Esau, whom God hated, and who was 'immoral and godless' according to Hebrews 12:16 had a worthy desire to reconcile with his brother, Jacob, more so than Jacob did</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.2.12, 2 <sup>nd</sup> para	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ "...the intellect is forever blind, with no capacity at all" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Jesus told the Jews if they were astute enough to analyze the sky for rain they were astute enough to see spiritual things (Luke 12:54-57) and to judge accordingly</li> <li>● Also, God has put eternity into the hearts of all men (Ecclesiastes 3:11), so "philosophically" man is not as blind as Calvin claims. Any spiritual blindness is due to willful ignorance (2Peter 3:5)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.2.18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ "...the cleverest of men is blinder than moles" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> There is no way to measure this metaphoric statement, so it is just an unsubstantiated opinion</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.3.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To answer why some non-elect live good lives, Calvin came up with a concept that bestows "special gifts of God, which He distributed in different forms and definite measures to men who are sinful in other respects." Calvin agrees with Plato that children of loyalty (i.e., the elect) are distinguished at birth with some special qualities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Calvin provides no Scriptural basis for this belief, because there is none. If it was possible to test babies at birth for their distinguished special qualities that mark them as the elect, then let us have mercy on the others and abort/slay them before they add sin upon sin and be judged even harsher at the end of their lives</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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2.3.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ "When the will is enslaved by sin, it cannot start to be good, let alone maintain good ways"               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> True</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ Calvin believed with Augustine that man, motivated by his own passion, is neither forced or coerced to do evil, but such is the depravity of his nature, he can only move in the direction of evil               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Au contraire, Jesus told the Jews they forced women into committing adultery by divorcing them (Matthew 5:32)</li> <li>● ...and the Jews of Nehemiah's days (Nehemiah 5:5) were forced to sell their children into slavery by other Jews, a clear violation of God's command (Leviticus 25:3)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.3.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin believes "our own will is abolished"               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> But Calvin does not provide scriptural evidence for this, because there is none. If our own will is abolished, then sinners (elect and non-elect) have legitimate excuses before God for their behavior. Even having a 'seared conscience' is a willful choice (1 Timothy 4:2)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.3.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin bases his belief on EXPERIENCE               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This is contrary to Scripture not being based on someone's private interpretation or experience (2Peter 1:20)</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ Calvin asserted that Adam was the only one with a free will</li> <li>◆ Calvin believed that God's favor is offered to all without exception, BUT only those who are INSPIRED by God's grace ask for it               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Again, based on Calvin's belief, the non-elect have a reasonable excuse since God did not inspire them or give them the ability to chose and make a way for them to repent</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.7.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin states "when God calls the elect to Himself they already have some experience of righteousness to build on"               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This seems contradictory with what Calvin claims of man's "intellect is forever blind, with no capacity at all." So what good is having a righteous experience if man cannot make 2 cents out of it and he is blind as a mole?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.7.12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin claims the Law acts as a whip, urging a man on like a lazy donkey               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This is Calvin's opinion. The Apostle Paul calls the Law a tutor which leads us to Christ (Galatians 3:24), and God draws us in a loving way (Jeremiah 31:3), and not a whip that goads us to go where we don't want to go</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.8.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin states our inability to obey God is our own fault               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> God does not call disobedience an "inability" but "unwillingness"</li> <li>● Romans 9:32. Many Israelites willfully refused to pursue God by faith (also see Nehemiah 9:17)</li> <li>● Hebrews 12:16. Esau was willfully immoral and godless</li> <li>● Jeremiah 19:15; 1Peter 2:8 God brings calamity on those who willfully harden themselves against His word</li> <li>● John 5:40. Jesus told the Jews (those who were 'not all Israel') He was willing to give them eternal life if they were willing to come to Him</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.16.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin says "the moment we (the elect) turn away from Christ in the slightest degree salvation disappears" and "So all who do not rest in Christ voluntarily (i.e., willingly) deprive themselves of grace"               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Here, Calvin either unknowingly contradicts himself or he double-talks as he alludes to losing one's salvation, and that one's will determines their salvation (this is very Arminian)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.16.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ "God ...was our enemy until He was reconciled to us by Christ"               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> A conclusion can be drawn from this statement (and other similar statements by Calvin as well) that all babies and mentally handicapped individuals who do not have the ability to participate in the reconciliation process are unable to attain Heaven</li> <li>● <b>Issues.</b> Naturally, we think of God as a gracious and merciful deity, and the prospect that God would doom infants and mentally handicapped to Hell is almost inconceivable. However, there are issues to consider:                   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If all babies do go to Heaven, then, conceivably, the best form of evangelism is abortion and infanticide</li> <li>2. If all babies do go to Heaven then at what point is the age of accountability when the non-elect babies flip from being Heaven-bound to Hell-bound? If it is not 20 years of age as noted in Numbers 14:28-31, then it is very subjective even for every individual</li> <li>3. Conceivably, since God knows which babies would be miscarried, aborted, mentally handicapped, or die in infancy/childhood before the so-called age of accountability He could easily choose to instill a 'chosen' soul into those individuals, and thereby circumvent the need for reconciliation</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Scripture Justification.</b> There are passages of Scripture that are often used to show that the infant-minded are Heaven bound:                   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>2Samuel 12:14-23.</b> King David's son, from his immoral relationship with Bathsheba, died and David commented that "I will go to him, but he will not return to me." Some use this passage to show that all</li> </ol> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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	<p>babies go to Heaven. However, that is a misapplication. First, if David's son did go to Heaven, and David knew it to be so, it could have been because David was also a prophet, and God could have revealed that information to him. So this passage could not be applied to all babies. In all likelihood, David was referring that he would join his son in the grave as he too would die one day.</p> <p>b) <b>1Kings 14:13.</b> King Jeroboam's son died young because God saw something good in him. Again, some take this to universally show that all young children go to heaven if they were to die in their innocence. That interpretation applies bad hermeneutics since the passage is only addressing one particular child, and his eternal destiny is not directly indicated as being heaven bound, only that God's grace would keep him from being eaten by dogs as the rest of his family would be.</p> <p>c) <b>Ezekiel 16:21.</b> "You have slain my children." This was God's charge against Israel for sacrificing "His" children to false idols. Again, some use this to universally show that all babies go to Heaven, but again, that's bad hermeneutics for this passage. At best we can only assume those children sacrificed were Heaven-bound, but not necessarily so. God also considered all Israel as His people, His children, His nation, but we know not every Israelite was automatically Heaven-bound.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Last Thoughts.</b> Scripture is very silent on this subject of whether or not infants and the infant-minded automatically go to Heaven upon their death. Arguments abound pro and con, but they all have weaknesses. The Catholics, who are arguably very astute with Scripture, not finding a reasonable solution in the Bible contrived in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century the concept of LIMBO for unbaptized infants and the mentally handicapped. In recent years the Catholic church has formally and officially backed away from that belief and concluded that all children who die do so in the <i>expectation</i> of "the universal salvation of God" and the "mediation of Christ", whether baptized or not "In effect, this means that all children who die go to Heaven" one source said. Recall that Calvin's answer to this predicament, like the Catholics, was to have all infants baptized to assure their entrance into Heaven. We have to admit that "the secret things belong onto God" (Deuteronomy 29:29).</li> </ul>
3.1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin states we have to concentrate our minds on the Holy Spirit before Jesus Christ can do anything for us</li> <li>• <b>Response.</b> This seems contradictory with what Calvin claims of man's "intellect is forever blind, with no capacity at all" and "he is blind as a mole"</li> <li>• Also, Calvin is claiming it is by our own will we get saved (this is Arminianism)</li> <li>• And how hard and how long does one need to concentrate? And on what aspects of the infinite and unfathomable Holy Spirit do we need to concentrate on?</li> </ul>
3.2.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ According to Calvin, faith includes "realization of God's will to us"</li> <li>• <b>Response.</b> So, according to Calvin, our salvation is based on what we realize, visualize or experience – again, this is very esoteric (mystical or feeling-based)</li> </ul>
3.2.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin says "we have not yet found a complete definition of faith" and "We shall have a complete definition of faith"</li> <li>• <b>Response.</b> This seems like more double-talk</li> </ul>
3.2.14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ "This knowledge (need for faith) is far superior: the human mind has to go out of and beyond itself to reach it"</li> <li>• <b>Response.</b> Again, Calvin is being mystical / esoteric</li> </ul>
3.2.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ According to Calvin "Faith is SURE and CERTAIN"</li> <li>• <b>Response.</b> According to Scripture, Faith is not Fact, so it cannot be absolutely sure and certain – it is based on things not seen. Faith is also temporal (earthly)</li> <li>• In essence our Faith in God is based on enough substantiated evidence to make a sound decision, but it is not 100% sure or certain – otherwise it is FACT and not Faith</li> </ul>
3.2.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ "God is far away from us and He must be discerned"</li> <li>• <b>Response.</b> According to James 4:8, we are to draw near to God and He will draw near to us. Discerning God seems to be more of Calvin's esoteric belief system (we must 'feel' God)</li> </ul>
3.3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin states that reconciliation is grasped by Faith, repentance is a byproduct of Faith, and the sinner must take the right path</li> <li>• <b>Response.</b> In essence, Calvin is saying the sinner must do something to get saved – the sinner must 'grasp' something, and he must take the right path to receive the byproduct of his faith, which is repentance</li> <li>• Jesus told the Jews when they asked Him what were the works one needs to do for God, by saying 'the ONE work we need to do is BELIEVE on Him' – John 6:28-28</li> </ul>
3.3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ The sinner must accept God's offer of love</li> <li>• <b>Response.</b> Calvin is on target here, but Calvin doesn't explain HOW to accept or WHEN to accept God's offer of love, but it seems that Calvin's accepting process is purely a mental effort the sinner must accomplish (i.e., mentally 'grasp the reconciliation by Faith', and the byproduct would be repentance and salvation)</li> <li>◆ Calvin states no righteousness can be found where the Holy Spirit is not in control</li> <li>• <b>Response.</b> What comes to mind is Ezekiel 16:52 where we are told the wicked nations surrounding Judah (who</li> </ul>

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Book.Chap.Sect	Comments on Passage from The Institutes of John Calvin
	<p>do not have the Holy Spirit) are more righteous than Judah</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin adds "No one will ever willingly obey the Law if he is not convinced that his efforts are pleasing to God" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This is purely Calvin's opinion. There are many "law-keepers" who are not convinced of anything but are just legalistic in their ways</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3.3.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin states "...it is useless (for God) to try to win us by gentle means" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This flies in the face of Romans 2:4 where God's goodness leads people to repentance and Jeremiah 31:3 where God draws His loved ones with lovingkindness</li> <li>● I can easily draw one conclusion from this statement alone – Calvin had fundamental flaws in his logic</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3.3.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin states before a sinner can truly repent his mind and heart must first be filled with the desire for righteousness, justice and mercy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This begs a few questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If a sinner has the desire for God's righteousness, justice and mercy before he repents, is this the drawing of Christ? Scripture doesn't allude to Calvin's process</li> <li>▪ Is the sinner saved before he repents since he already is filled with the desire for God's righteousness, justice and mercy?</li> <li>▪ What is the difference between a sinner repenting and "truly repenting"?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3.7.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin states "The Lord commands us to do good to EVERYONE without exception" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Scripture does not support Calvin's view. Doing good is often times conditional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Jesus does say we are to love our enemies, but love doesn't always take the form of doing good to them</li> <li>▪ Like God, we should withhold good things from those who sin (Jeremiah 5:25); For example, the Prodigal Son came to his senses once he realized no one gave him anything, Luke 15:16:17</li> <li>▪ Jesus only healed one at the pool of Bethesda. Wouldn't it have been good for everyone to be healed</li> <li>▪ Jesus did not save the second thief on the cross. Wouldn't it be good to save everyone universally?</li> <li>▪ Jesus showed His love for His enemies by dying for us while we were yet sinners (i.e., non-elect) and giving us the opportunity to accept Him on His terms</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3.7.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin also states "the only limit to one's generosity is the end of his resources" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Again, Scripture does not support Calvin's concept of deleting one's resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When the early church was helping the poor in their midst, the rich believers still had homes to meet in – so they did not sell everything, nor were they commanded to</li> <li>▪ When Peter told the beggar at the temple he had no gold or silver to give him, he failed to mention he had earlier received a lot of resources at his feet from the rich for the purpose of benefitting the poor, but apparently, that money was not available for that beggar. It was earmarked for others within the church</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3.8.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin states that believers "must be prepared for a hard, strenuous and testing life, full of many troubles" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Not necessarily so. Many believers can attest to having a blessed life, and even non-believers can attest to having a tough life</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3.9.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin says that believers should train themselves to have a contempt for this life – but not to the point of hating it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> But that is the definition of contempt</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3.19.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin says we are free before God to choose in non-essential matters (e.g., what to eat &amp; wear) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Where does one draw the line between essential and non-essential matters?</li> <li>● Does God have sovereignty over the non-essentials? Of course He does! So what is the difference between us having a choice with non-essentials as compared with essential matters such as our eternal salvation?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3.21.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>Note on Election.</b> If one does not believe in election the way John Calvin articulates it they "detract from God's glory and prevent true humility" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This opinion of Calvin is not supported by Scripture. In fact many cults employ the same tactic</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3.22.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin does not believe that God elects those whom He foresees who would be holy, but God elects those to make them holy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This position is in line with Scripture – we are predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3.24.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin says "there is hardly anyone (of the elect) who does not think sometimes 'If my salvation comes only from God's election, what proof have I of that election?' (there is none!) When this thought dominates an individual, he will be permanently miserable, in terrible torment or mental confusion" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> What a sad state of those who believe in election the way Calvin articulates it! If Faith was SURE &amp; CERTAIN as Calvin stated in 3.2.15, why should there be any doubt?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4.1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ There is no salvation and no forgiveness outside of the church</li> <li>◆ Calvin sees Israel as the church <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This seems to be a holdover of Calvin's former Roman Catholic days</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Rod O'Neil's Comments on John Calvin's Institutes

Book.Chap.Sect	Comments on Passage from The Institutes of John Calvin
4.1.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin quotes Augustine on God's secret predestination plan for man</li> </ul>
4.1.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ The sacraments (i.e., baptism, communion, marriage) are critical and go hand-in-hand with preaching                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> The sacraments are critical to sanctification but not to salvation</li> <li>● Calvin placed excessive esoteric meaning to the sacraments. For example, he believed communion was spiritual food able to keep people alive physically (see 4.2.1 and 4.17.1)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4.1.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin believed like the Catholics, the church is the guardian of the truth                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This is presumably from 1Timothy 3:15. Actually, God is the guardian of His truth, and the church, according to 1Timothy 3:15, is the ground/supporter/defender of God's truth</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin believes that the sacraments (i.e., baptism, communion) are equal to the word of God                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> The sacraments are definitely a part of the word of God, but Calvin placed excessive esoteric meaning to the sacraments – e.g., he believed communion is spiritual food able to keep people alive physically</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ Augustine is put on par with Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Origen (early church fathers)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Augustine rejected the perpetuity of Mary's virginity, but he accepted 11 Apocryphal books as canonical</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4.2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin sees the Apostolic role still active (similar to how the Catholics believe the Pope is the living Apostle today)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> If Apostles are still active, then we should see signs of an Apostle (miracles &amp; wonders) to substantiate their specific appointment from Christ; and the word of God should still be growing as Apostolic letters and even emails are crafted and collected</li> <li>● Again, Calvin's basic understanding of Scripture seemed skewed from his Catholic days</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4.12.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ If a person leading the communion service knowingly admits an unworthy person, he is guilty of sacrilege                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This is a Catholic holdover</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4.12.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin states that Paul gave the immoral man of 1Corinthians 5 over to Satan that he might be saved                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Actually, Paul handed the man over to Satan (i.e., threw him out of church) to protect the church, and to entice the man through worldly/Satanic affliction to repent from the error of his ways. The man could easily have been a backslidden believer (already saved)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4.14.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin over emphasized the sacraments                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Catholic holdover</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4.14.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin believed the Lord's mercy and grace come through His word and the sacraments</li> <li>◆ Calvin agreed with Augustine that the 'efficacy of the word is produced in the sacrament'</li> <li>◆ According to Calvin, only by faith can someone grasp this                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Infants (elect or non-elect) are not able to grasp this even when baptized</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4.14.12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ But "our confidence" should not be attached to the sacraments                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> This seems like doubletalk as compared to his previous statements on the sacraments</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4.15.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin believed in baptism regeneration (i.e., one must be baptized to be saved)</li> </ul>
4.16.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin believed baptism is substituted for circumcision and serves the same purpose as a badge of adoption and an initiation rite                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Romans 9 conveys that circumcision does not save. It was only an outward sign of what should have been an inward truth. Alas, not all of those circumcised Jews were the promised sons of Abraham</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4.16.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin believed that infant baptism was a must (pedobaptist)</li> </ul>
4.16.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin believed just as circumcision assures salvation to a Jewish child, so does baptism to a Christian child; God's covenant with Abraham applies to Christians now...and not to believe this is an "extreme insult to Christ"                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Pedobaptists include Catholics, Presbyterians and numerous off-shoots</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4.17.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin believed communion is spiritual food which keeps us alive and gives us new strength                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Scripture says we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13), and there is no correlation to the aspect of taking communion in this passage</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4.17.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin eventually states that communion is just a reminder                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Again, this seems like doubletalk</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4.17.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin comes across as if he believes in transubstantiation – Jesus is actually in the communion artifacts</li> </ul>
4.17.31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin believes Christ is in the bread &amp; wine (transubstantiation)</li> </ul>
4.17.31-32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Calvin clearly repudiates transubstantiation in this passage                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Response.</b> Communion is a mystery that he feels (esoteric) – but does not understand</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Conclusion:**

- I believe the late Dr. D. James Kennedy said it best – “To be a good Calvinist, one needs to be a Presbyterian” (recall that Presbyterians believe in infant baptism much like Calvin)
- Those within the Baptist camp who believe Baptists should go back to their “reformed” roots should first revisit Calvin's teachings. The argument is often made the Southern Baptists, in particular, diverted from sound doctrine and their Calvinistic/reformed teachings when the social gospel took hold in post Civil War years. It should be noted, however, following the Civil War the Southern Baptists forsook their previous and erroneous teachings on slavery and racial issues and strongly positioned themselves to be the largest missionary sending organization in the world. Comparatively, the Presbyterians, who more strongly hold to Calvin's teachings, have languished doctrinally and morally as many of their churches have accommodated to having non-heterosexual pastors/leaders, and they have also languished from a mission's perspective as their numbers continue to decline over past decades
- Therefore, it looks like the teachings of Calvin offer no direct and long lasting benefit to maintaining doctrinal purity and missionary fervor, personal holiness and spiritual maturity. So what good is it to propagate a teaching that is often times divisive and of no real spiritual value?
- The one positive aspect Calvin's teachings do have is presenting a challenge to each believer to dig deeper into God's word (beyond the surface knowledge) and determine for themselves how to evaluate what is sound doctrine and how to properly respond to those who ask about the faith that does reside in them
- **A Word on God's Sovereignty.** Calvinists often accuse non-Calvinists for not believing in God's sovereignty over everything. I cannot speak for every non-Calvinist, but I most certainly acknowledge God's sovereignty over everything, though I do not personally hold to every Calvinist tenant. There is nothing that God is unaware of or does not know from eternity past to eternity future EXCEPT for experiencing what it is like to live, suffer and die like a human. However, since Jesus took on our flesh God now can sympathize with us as Scriptures states as Jesus learned obedience from his sufferings. In fact, God is so sovereign, He can still accomplish His will and direct the affairs of men to the minutest detail without turning us into robots. So, whether we chose to sin or chose to be righteous in the moments God gives us, or whether we choose to go to college, the military, marry young or not marry at all, or any other aspect of life God can still accomplish His will. That's how sovereign our God is.
- **Note on TULIP.** I did not address in this document the Calvinistic/Arminianist **TULIP** theory since Calvin did not address it as such in his institutes. And to be honest, Calvin never addressed his position on “Irresistible Grace.” If I was a betting man, I would think he would lean against Irresistible Grace based on what he wrote in 2.16.1 where he states “*the moment we (the elect) turn away from Christ in the slightest degree salvation disappears*” and “*so all who do not rest in Christ voluntarily (i.e., willingly) deprive themselves of grace*”. This alone would dissolve the TULIP theory as held by most ardent Calvinist proponents
  - ♦ **T**otal Depravity
  - ♦ **U**nconditional Election
  - ♦ **L**imited Atonement
  - ♦ **I**rresistible Grace
  - ♦ **P**erseverance of the Saints.