

THE LOST HISTORY OF CALVINISM

by Elder Harold Hunt

Hunt's historical examination of persecution by Protestant reformers, particularly of Baptists and Anabaptists. He documents how leaders including Calvin and Luther persecuted dissenters despite having been persecuted themselves, critiquing selective historical narratives that hide these events.

29 Chapters

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002 Preface

Preface No writer has the ability, or the authority, to issue the final word on his subject. Regardless of how well he may have done his work, or how high an opinion he may have of his own point of view, it is still his opinion, his observations, his conclusions. It is inevitable there will be others, better informed, and more widely read, who will reach other conclusions. That certainly applies to this work. I do not expect that my observations will be accepted as the final word, and they should not be. The only final word is God's Word, and it is the right, and the duty, of each person to read the Bible and reach his own conclusions.

I have repeatedly gone back through these pages in an effort to remove any unnecessarily negative remarks. I have no desire to offend any little child of God who has been captivated by the notions of John Calvin and his followers. The Bible clearly teaches five fundamental doctrines with regard to the grace of God. For almost 500 years the followers of John Calvin have advocated a system which resembles those doctrines and it has become customary to refer them as The Five Points of Calvinism. It is easy to see how so many humble, prayerful children of God have been confused.

History has provided an army of articulate, and well informed, Calvinistic writers who are able to overwhelm any reader. They meticulously lay out their many subjects, with their topics, sub-topics, and proof texts. They cover those subjects so accurately and so well, their knowledge seems almost encyclopedic. They present such conclusive arguments it would be folly to argue with them. They cover such a wide range of theological subjects that they seem to leave no subject untouched and unexplained. In the face of such obvious scholarship, it is not easy to realize there are other subjects on which their system is totally unscriptural, and totally alien to the religion of Christ and the apostles. With all the things they got right, it is hard to realize that from the very beginning, Calvinism-or Augustinianism if you prefer-has opposed some of the most fundamental and vital doctrines of the Bible.

Paul described a people who were "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). More than any other people, that text describes Calvinistic theologians. No one can read their massive dissertations and doubt these are brilliant men.

They are able to travel the entire range of scripture, and assemble proof texts to bolster their arguments. And on many subjects they are not only learned, articulate, and convincing, they reach conclusions that are unquestionably correct.

They can soar to the very heights in talking about God and his attributes. They can come as near to explaining the mysteries of the Trinity as anybody ever did. They talk about election and redemption, about resurrection and eternal judgment, about heaven and hell. They assemble literally mountains of arguments and proof texts, and it is folly to challenge them. They assemble systems of theology that are the wonder of religion. Who would dare doubt these are brilliant, learned and articulate men? But if they can range back and forth through the Bible, both in their

own language, and in the original languages, finding proof texts to establish every facet of their doctrine on other subjects- there is no excuse for their denying the plain teaching of the Bible on those points on which they have so steadfastly opposed Bible truth.

I pray that God will give me the grace to be as gentle as it is possible to be. There is nothing that terrifies me more than the thought of offending one of the Lord's little ones. But as fearful as I am about offending anyone unnecessarily, I am faced with the gravity of the situation. The stakes are high, and when anyone misrepresents our Maker, and opposes his people, the way Augustinianism/Calvinism has for the last 1600 years, it becomes our solemn duty to speak up.

Calvinism did not begin with John Calvin in the 1500's. Calvin simply resurrected the system Saint Augustine had preached over 1000 years before. Augustine was the source of Calvinism, and of the persecution of Christians by other Christians. John Calvin incorporated both into his system. Calvin's Calvinism, and religious persecution, have always gone hand in hand. We will look briefly at that connection in this book. For over 200 years our American people have been protected by the First Amendment, and unless any reader has spent some time studying the history of religion, he will likely be in the dark about the nature of religious persecution. In this book we hope, first, to look at the doctrinal teachings of Calvinism, and then, to trace the history of the system, and the way its advocates have, for 1600 years, systematically victimized the Lord's people.

Note: If it seems that we have neglected the Calvinists of England and America, that is not an oversight. I believe the material we have provided is fully sufficient to show the character and history of Calvinism as a religious system. If the material we have provided is not sufficient to demonstrate the points we set out to prove, any further account of Calvinism in England and America would not do so.

Second, I am presently preparing an account of the London Confession of Faith of 1689, and the conditions that gave rise to it, and to the Philadelphia Confession of 1742. In that volume I expect to spend ample time with the Calvin-ism of England and America. I do not think it is necessary, or beneficial, to cover the same ground twice. With the Lord's assistance, we will have that work ready some time next year.

More than that, I am determined to hold this book to about 200 pages. I would not want to spend so much time and energy on a book that lies on the shelf unread, and it is my opinion that most people are many times more likely to read a 200 page book through to the end, than they are a 400 page book.

Little, if anything, original with me

You should not expect to find much, if anything, that is original with me. This entire book is little more than a collection of quotes from other writers who have gone before. The ground we will be covering has been covered many times before by writers much more articulate and better informed than I will ever be.

Over the years, Baptist writers like Thomas Crosby, Joshua Thomas, G.H. Orchard, William Jones, Thomas Armitage, Robert Robinson, and Sylvester Hassell have all covered the ground. This book is largely a long list of quotes from men such as those. They make the case much better than I can.

Along with those Baptist writers, we will spend time examining direct quotes from Calvinistic writers, especially John Calvin, Augustine of Hippo, and the various Calvinistic confessions of faith. Augustine of Hippo originated the system we call Calvinism 1600 years ago, but it was John Calvin who, in the 1500's, organized it and put it forth for the modern world. The system has ever since borne his name. We will spend much of our time examining the career and doctrines of Augustine.

If I might repeat myself, we must acknowledge that, on the one hand, Calvinism is a vast, comprehensive system that spans the entire range of Bible doctrine, and on ever so many subjects it is accurate, to the point, and utterly irrefutable. But, on the other hand, there are some of the most vital doctrines of the Bible on which Calvinism is as opposite the doctrine of the Bible as it is possible for any system to be.

We will show that, in spite of all it got right, Calvinism is really a clever merger of Judaism, pagan philosophy, and some Bible doctrine.

We will show that, in spite of all their learning, when the Protestant Reformers reached their conclusions, they often came down- point by point-in opposition to Bible truth.

I find it strange that so few of those who call themselves Calvinists have ever studied Calvin from his own writings. As a general rule most of them have obviously learned about Calvin from passages carefully, and cautiously, selected for them by Calvinist writers. The name of John Calvin is one of the brightest stars in the pantheon of religion, and I have no desire to sully his memory; but an obligation to the truth requires us to be faithful. God's people have a right to know the truth, and we cannot allow the reputation of any man to drive us from our duty.

We will show, by direct quotes, that for centuries John Calvin and his followers have taught that God is able to know the future, only because he is the cause, the author, of every act that will ever be committed, regardless of whether that act is good or evil. We will show that Calvin made fun of those who believe God only orchestrates circumstances, and manipulates sinners, to bring about the result he wants. We will show that he taught God "forces the reprobate to do him service," that he forces sinners to sin. Author, cause, and forces are all his words. We will give you book, chapter, and verse; you can read him for yourself.

God calls on the church to come out from the world and be a separate people. We will show that both Calvin and the Westminster divines believed in merging the church and the world by joining church and state. They taught the church had the right to direct the government, and use the government to force people into their church. The Bible teaches that every heaven born soul should believe the gospel, repent of sin, and be baptized publicly as a testimony to his faith in Christ.

We will show that, rejecting believers' baptism, Calvin and the Westminster divines advocated infant baptism in order to bring the entire population into their church-to merge the church and the world.

God taught that we should in meekness instruct those who oppose themselves(2 Timothy 2:25). We will show that Calvin emphatically rejected that Bible principle. He taught that the church had the right to use the secular authorities to arrest, torture, banish-and if necessary kill-those who

would not submit to their authority.

We will also show that, beginning with Fox's Book of Martyrs, the Calvinists have been feverishly rewriting their own history. They have been very faithful to tell how they suffered under the Roman Catholic Inquisition, but they have been just as careful to cover up their Protestant Inquisition. We will provide information about the Protestant persecution of Baptists, which, for what he calls causes reasonable, John Fox thought it best not to record.

We will show that Calvinism has been a bloody religion. On those occasions when they held the power of the sword, they persecuted, tortured, and sometimes killed, those who disagreed with them. They were only stopped here in America by the First Amendment to the Constitution. Throughout its history, Calvinism has been a very dangerous system, and our people need to know what it is all about.

I have spent the last fifty years assembling most of the sources I will be quoting. Several of the books had been out of print for many years, and I happened to learn about limited reprints, and acquired the books during those brief windows of opportunity. But we live in a remarkable age. Books that have been virtually impossible to find for generations have now become available on the internet. With a little determination, you will be able to verify every quote. To those of you who have never studied the history of Calvinism, be prepared to be surprised at the clear historical record. We will provide names, dates, places, and direct quotes for every fact. And we will provide book, chapter, and verse references. You can look it all up for yourself.

Since we are examining what has come to be known as Calvinism, I have looked carefully at the writings of John Calvin and Augustine of Hippo. I began studying the two of them when I was still a teenager. My copy of Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion has the date 1956 scribbled on the flyleaf. I have, at least, three copies of Augustine's Confessions. I bought my first copy of Augustine's Confessions that same year. It is all underscored and noted. It has my little ex libris on the fly leaf. I used to do that when I finished a book.

I was searching for the Lord's church, and with that in mind, I struggled line by line through Augustine's Confessions as soon as I bought it. I did not fare so well with Calvin's Institutes. I spent a large amount of time with Calvin, but I did not finish the book. The book is two fairly large volumes. More than that, I found Calvin very difficult to read. As a writer, he will freeze you to death. I must admit that I have read comments by others who reach a different conclusion. But with his constant raging against the Baptists (Anabaptists) of his day, and his constantly calling them such scurrilous names, Calvin turned me off so that I did not, at that time, finish the book.

Calvin made no effort to conceal his hatred for the Pope, for the Anabaptists, and especially for the man he called that Anabaptist, Servetus. He had a twenty year vendetta against Michael Servetus. Servetus offended Calvin when they were both young, and Calvin never forgave him. Calvin pestered the Roman Catholic authorities about Servetus, demanding to know why they did not burn him, since they had burned so many others, and he assured his friends that if Servetus ever came to Geneva, he would see to it that he never left alive. He finally trapped Servetus, brought him to trial, and had him burned.

That, among others of Calvin's attitudes, dampened my desire to study his work, but since that time, I have since spent more time than I probably should have in reading his books.

01 Persecution of Baptists by Protestants

“And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (Hebrews 11:36-38).

Before the Lord went away, he told the disciples, “They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (John 16:2). In those two passages the Lord recorded in advance much of the history of the church. The experience of his people has been one long trail of blood. At every turn the adversary has used fair means and foul to hinder the gospel. We will look at some of the experiences of the saints. But while we will be as faithful as possible to record that long trail of persecution, we want to be as careful as we can be of the tender feelings of those who read these lines. We have no desire to injure the feelings of any person. For centuries Christians have chastised the Jews for crucifying the Lord. But when we read the Bible record we discover that “the common people heard him gladly” (Mark 12:37). It was the religious leaders, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and scribes, who saw him as a threat to their wealth and power, and they dogged his every step. “The chief priests and elders [the religious hierarchy] persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas and destroy Jesus” (Matthew 27:20). It was at their urging that the multitude cried out, “Crucify him, crucify him.”

We want to say it as clearly as it can be said. We must make a sharp distinction between Judaism and the Jewish people-between the religious hierarchy, and those the Bible calls the common people. The Bible makes a distinction between that false system, along with those tyrants who used it to victimize the people, and the people who were victimized by it. By the same token, for centuries Protestants have chastised Roman Catholics for persecuting their ancestors, and there can be no question that during what we call the Dark Ages, and especially during the Protestant Reformation, the Roman Catholic Inquisition did sentence untold numbers of Protestants, Anabaptists and other dissenters to be tortured and killed. While that record is clear, it does not give anyone the right to act as if our own Catholic neighbors were involved in those atrocities. Most of us know Roman Catholics who are as decent, as honest, as God-fearing as anyone you would care to meet. We need to be careful about the way we present the historical record. The Lord pronounces a great woe on those who offend one of his little ones.

One thing we hope to demonstrate is that while Protestant writers have been faithful to record the transgressions of the Catholic Inquisition, they have been just as careful to conceal the fact that when the shoe was on the other foot, they were themselves just as brutal in persecuting those who differed with them.

Again, we tremble at the thought of putting the facts on paper. Our people have the right to know the facts, but we must keep it always in mind that we are talking about a system. We are not

talking about those people in our day who subscribe to what is left of that system. We cannot hold our Protestant neighbors responsible for the transgressions of their predecessors. They did not engage in those atrocities. Very few of them are even aware of what happened, and we should not imply they are in any way implicated. For over 400 years, Protestant writers have been rewriting their history, and very few Protestants of today have any idea of their own history. For instance, when John Fox wrote his Book of Martyrs, he was very faithful to record the persecution of Protestants by Catholics, but he was just as careful to conceal the fact the Protestants were just as vicious with Baptists. For instance, he faithfully recorded the steadfastness of the Protestants, Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley, as they were led to the stake to be burned. He did not record that not long before that he had personally pleaded with Cranmer not to burn a Baptist, Joan Boucher, (Joan of Kent) at the stake. It would have taken away from the story, if his readers had known Cranmer was probably reaping what he sowed.

It is impossible to overestimate the extent to which Fox's book has altered and colored the thinking of people with regard to the persecution of Baptists by the early Protestants. In 1554, John Fox published the Latin edition of his Book of Martyrs. He detailed the suffering of his brethren, especially under the reign of Queen Mary. No one can read his material, especially some of his other letters, without being convinced that John Fox was a truly godly man. But, godly man though he was, when he published his English edition in 1563, his loyalty to his friends would not allow him to record their own atrocities against the Baptists, Quakers and others. In his History of the English Baptists, Thomas Crosby (1738) tells us, "These sad instances of persecution practiced by the Protestants in this king's reign against the Anabaptists are in Fox's Latin book of martyrs [1554], but left out in his English edition [1563], out of a tender regard, as is supposed, to the reputation of the martyrs in Queen Mary's day" (vol. 1, pg. 59). Fox published both editions of his book while John Calvin was still living, and, regardless of his tender regard for the reputation of his friends, with that book he began a whitewash, that has continued now for over 400 years. With the thousands of books flooding the market, it is impossible for us to realize what a sensation Fox's book was in his day. There is nothing in our day with which to compare the attention, and the veneration, it received.

According to the Sketch of the Author in William Forbush's 1926 edition, Fox's Book of Martyrs "was ordered by the bishops to be placed in every cathedral church in England, where it was often found chained, as the Bible was in those days, to a lectern for the access of the people." Except for the Bible, no other book in history has ever received such treatment. The book was very effective in recording the excesses of Roman Catholic persecution, and concealing persecution by Protestants. In the Peasants' War, the German peasants had requested such rights as choosing their own pastors, gathering firewood to heat their homes, supplying their tables with fish and game, and being paid for any work they did above what was customary. The German princes refused, and Martin Luther urged them to "stab, kill, and strangle" them. 50,000 peasants (many of them Anabaptists) were butchered at Luther's urging. Fox recorded Luther's struggle with the Pope, and especially his objection to the sale of indulgences, but for what he called causes reasonable, he did not tell about Luther's involvement in the slaughter of the peasants. In his early days, Luther advocated liberty of conscience, but Fox did not record that he later urged that Anabaptists should be pursued to the death, and that he made good on that threat. The Catholics burned Baptists; the Lutherans more often drowned them. To his credit, Fox does mention John

Calvin's involvement in the burning of Michael Servetus, but he pretends Calvin was swept along by the spirit of the time. He does not mention that Calvin had previously threatened that if Servetus ever came to Geneva, he would see to it he would never leave alive. He mentions that Calvin tried to prevent the burning. He does not mention that Calvin wanted him beheaded instead. He does not mention that the Consistory, of which Calvin was President, ordered a child's head to be chopped off for striking his parents. He mentions that Calvin "made all the people declare, upon oath, their assent to the confession of faith" he and William Farel had written. He does not mention that those who objected were driven out of their homes, and banished from the town.

Fox died long before the Presbyterians took over Parliament in England in the 1640's. So he was too early to record their drive to assume the power that once belonged to Rome. By 1611, the Protestants learned that burning Baptists at the stake only fueled the fire. But that did not stop them from arresting Baptist preachers, and leaving them to starve and freeze for years in filthy jails until they finally died there. He did not mention that, out of desperation, their families sometimes joined them in jail, and that they all starved and froze together.

He did not mention that, if a person happened to die not long after being baptized, the Protestant authorities pretended the chill of being immersed was the cause, and they then charged the preacher with murder, and did all within their power to have him hanged. Samuel Oates was one preacher so charged. When the Puritans came to America in 1629, they set up their own theocracy, and forbade any other kind of worship. Until the First Amendment put a stop to it, they arrested, publicly whipped, and banished Baptists and Quakers. They drove Roger Williams from his home in the dead of winter. They publicly whipped Obadiah Holmes until he had to sleep for weeks on his knees and elbows. Because she refused to pay a tithe to support the Puritan minister, they arrested Isaac Backus's mother on a cold winter night, even though she was burning with a fever, and carried her off to jail.

Again, we have no desire to injure the tender feelings of those who identify themselves as Calvinists. Many of them are the victims, not the villains, in this matter. They have just not done their homework. They have no use for Arminianism, and they have no taste for much of what, today, passes for the Christian religion. Some of those they see on television look more like religious charlatans than gospel preachers. Then they read brilliant and articulate Calvinistic writers, and it seems like a breath of fresh air. They devour their books, without realizing there is a much better, and more scriptural alternative.

It seems very few of today's Calvinists have actually studied Calvin as an original source. They usually know him from very carefully-and cautiously-selected quotes by Calvinist writers. I have no doubt that many of those good brethren would recoil with horror at much of what John Calvin actually did and taught. Our American people have been so free for so long we have forgotten what religious persecution is all about. The First Amendment has been so effective in quelling persecution, we have forgotten how brutal both Catholics and Calvinists were so long as they were able use the law to force conversions.

02 Lost History of Calvinism

The Lost History of Calvinism The Calvinism of John Calvin and the Westminster Confession is dead. It has been dead for almost 200 years, and it is unlikely it will ever be resurrected. But while that is true, the fundamental principles of Calvinism are resilient. They keep rearranging themselves and showing up in one form or another. They have done that throughout history. For at least fifty years there has been considerable effort to establish a modified, more acceptable, version of Calvinism, and that effort is gaining ground in some circles. In 1959, D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, J. I. Packer, and about 20 others held the first of what they called the Puritan and Westminster Conferences. J. I. Packer later dropped out, but the conference continued to meet every December for the next twenty years. According to Lloyd-Jones, at the time they began, “virtually no Puritan books were then in print.” It was their purpose to republish those old Puritan writers, and so spark new interest in Calvinism. They have enjoyed considerable success. The renewed interest in Calvinism is the result of that series of meetings. It produced The Banner of Truth Trust, the Banner of Truth Magazine, and a steady stream of Puritan books republished by a large number of publishing houses. That publishing effort has brought on inquiry into Calvinism, both among Protestants and some Baptists.

John Calvin did not originate the system that bears his name. Lorraine Boettner says, “Augustine had taught the essentials of the system a thousand years before Calvin was born, and the whole body of the leaders of the Reformation movement taught the same” (The Reformed Doctrine....pg 4). Louis Berkhof tells us, “The Reformers shared the views of Augustine...” (System of Theology pg 220). “According to the common doctrine of Augustinians, as expressed in the Westminster Confession, etc...” Charles Hodge (Systematic Theology, vol. 2, pg 321). Search as many Calvinistic Systematic Theologies as you will, and every one of them claims to be a follower of Augustine. If at times it appears that we are paying more attention to Augustine than we are to Calvin, that is the reason. Augustine was the real founder of Calvinism.

Calvin only resurrected the doctrines of Augustine, and endeavored to restore the Catholic religion to its Augustinian roots.

I acknowledge the great influence of Calvinism and the attention it is presently receiving, but I am convinced the system is broken, and it cannot be repaired. Before we get to that, I want to point out that there is a vast difference between that broken system and the honest and decent people who are victimized by it. In this book I am not talking about all those good, and sincere people who call themselves Calvinists. Most of them have very little idea what Calvinism is all about. They have been led astray by teachers, who, generally, do not themselves fully understand the doctrines they are teaching.

I will do all within my power to expose the falsehood of the system, but I earnestly pray that God will give me the grace and the tact to do it without injuring the tender feelings of those precious children of God, who have been deceived by it. Those good and honorable people have been a benefit to this nation, and we owe them a debt of gratitude we will never be able to repay.

Before we get to any of that, we need to acknowledge that many of the claims of the Calvinists are clearly true. Those claims are supported by the historical record, and it is folly to deny them. For one thing, Calvinists are accustomed to claiming that Calvinism produced the economic and industrial development that began just after the Protestant Reformation and spread over the entire Western World. They point out that the Roman Catholic Church discouraged scientific research and development, and was not favorable to commerce. Their lack of interest in commerce resulted in what has come to be known as the Dark Ages.

It is not easy to dismiss the argument. It can be shown that the fall of the Roman Empire, and the development and rise of the Roman Catholic Church, marked the beginning of the Dark Ages, and that sad period in history ended with the Protestant Reformation. The Industrial Revolution began in Protestant Scotland, and spread through England, America, and most of Northern Europe. That is exactly the area covered by the Reformation. Rome continued to control Spain, Italy and most of Southern Europe. If you draw a line across Europe, south of the line there has been poverty; north of the line has been prosperity. Where the Reformation went, prosperity followed. Where the Pope retained control, poverty was the rule. An even clearer example of that is in the Western Hemisphere. The Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620. In 1629, the Puritans came. That began a flood of Calvinism that spread across the continent. At the time of the Revolution, fully 75% of Americans were Calvinists. Till this day, Mexico, and Middle and South America remain solidly Roman Catholic. If you draw a line beginning along the Rio Grande River, you have poverty to the Roman Catholic south, and prosperity to the North. America is no longer the Calvinistic stronghold it was two hundred years ago, but we are still reaping benefits from the influence of those hard working Calvinists that went before. Regardless of what a person may think of Calvinism as a religious system, there is no need, and no benefit, in denying the obvious. That brings us to the American Revolution. No honest and accurate survey of Calvinism can ignore the role those Calvinistic Puritans of New England played in the founding of this country. They were brave and patriotic people who were willing to risk everything they had, even their very lives, in order to gain freedom from an oppressive foreign power.

Puritanism in New England was one hundred years past its heyday when the Revolution began. But those sturdy New England patriots continued to be what Calvinism had made them. They were a tough, resourceful, fighting people. The Revolution would never have gotten off the ground, if it had not been for such New Englanders as Samuel Adams, John Adams, and John Hancock. Those names will forever live in the memory of those who love freedom. The Puritans, Presbyterians, and the various Reformed denominations, carried more than their share of the load in America's struggle for independence. They were well represented both among the Founding Fathers and in the Continental Army. Their Calvinistic literature was a great force in the build up preceding the war. It conditioned the people to think in terms of independence. Outside of the Bible, the single most influential book in the entire conflict was *Lex Rex* (The Law and the Prince), written by an English Presbyterian, Samuel Rutherford. Most of the Founding Fathers were influenced by the ideas he set forth.

Many of the organizers of the Revolution studied at Princeton under the Presbyterian educator, John Witherspoon. Tim LaHaye points out that among his many students were "the president, James Madison, the vice president, Aaron Burr, ten cabinet officers, twenty-one senators, thirty-nine congressmen, and twelve governors" (*Faith of our Founding Fathers*, pg 85).

Witherspoon had more influence on the war than any other educator. Again, the Revolution would never have gotten off the ground if it had not been for such Presbyterian educators as Rutherford and Witherspoon, both staunch Calvinists.

We must take time to point out that there were two major struggles going on during the Revolution. There was the struggle for social, political, and economic freedom from England. In that struggle our nation owes a debt of gratitude to our Calvinist forbears. The New England Puritans (Congregationalists) were especially active in that part of the war. It is in that struggle they contributed very much to the well being of this nation. We shall never be able to thank God enough for all they did.

Then there was the struggle for religious freedom. There the facts were entirely opposite; those were two entirely different fields of endeavor. The Established Calvinistic churches wanted political and economic freedom; but they were the most bitter enemies of religious freedom. Except in Virginia, England never tyrannized over religion in America. Rather, the colonists often appealed to the King for relief from tyranny by the religious Establishment in America, and he often provided the relief they requested.

Prior to the Revolution every colony had its own established religion. In one way or another, church and state were united. One religion was established by law, and no other religion was allowed.

Every citizen was required to pay taxes to support the Establishment preacher. He was required by law to attend the Establishment church, and to submit his babies to be baptized. He was forbidden to submit to believers' baptism, having once been baptized in infancy in an Establishment church. Preachers who disagreed with the Established religion were forbidden to constitute churches, to erect meeting houses, or even to preach.

Even after the adoption of the First Amendment forbidding the establishment of religion, the states continued to have their various State Churches. The First Amendment only affected the federal government; it did not bind the states. Massachusetts fought against religious liberty to the bitter end. They were the very last to grant religious freedom.

New Englanders like John Adams, who fought long and hard for political freedom from England, fought just as hard against relinquishing their own stranglehold on religion in America.

Baptists played their part in the revolution, and the war could not have been won without them; but war was not their normal response. They had suffered for centuries, first at the hands of the Roman Catholic Inquisitors, and then at the hands of the Protestant Inquisition. It was more their way to suffer in silence, to turn the other cheek. They almost counted it their badge of honor to suffer persecution for Christ's sake. In England they suffered first at the hands of the Catholics. Then after King Henry VIII declared himself the head of the Church of England, they suffered at the hands of the Anglicans, or the Presbyterians, depending on which side had the upper hand at the time. In the 1640's the Presbyterians took control of Parliament and led a revolt against King Charles I. Their commander, Oliver Cromwell, promised religious freedom to all, and the Baptists thought they saw a chance to reduce their suffering. They joined forces with their Protestant tormenters, and in the civil wars that followed they were well represented in Cromwell's army.

They fought bravely and well; but they did not engage in the conflict until the Presbyterians led the way. Until then they simply continued worshiping God in their own way-and suffering at the hands of Anglicans and Presbyterians alike. Their experience was the same in America. The Catholics have never had the power to persecute in America the way they did in Europe; but the Protestants have. In New England Baptists suffered at the hands of the Puritans. To give just one of many possible examples, the Puritans caught Obadiah Holmes, and two other Baptist preachers quietly holding a meeting in a private home in Massachusetts. The officers burst into the home and arrested the three of them. The others were released on payment of bond. When, as a matter of principle, Obadiah Holmes refused to pay the bond, or to allow it to be paid for him, he was publicly beaten with thirty stripes from a three pronged whip. For weeks he slept on his knees and elbows. He could not bear for his back to touch the bed. The Puritans in New England and Anglicans in Virginia were brutal in their treatment of our Baptist ancestors, but when the break with England finally came, Baptists and Protestants fought side by side against their English oppressors. The Baptists saw an opportunity to gain their own freedom. They made it abundantly clear they were fighting for freedom from religious tyranny in America, and they firmly resisted until that point was carried. Then, they fell in beside their tormentors, and together- and with the help of their Maker-they gained freedom for us all.

Baptists pulled their fair share of the load in the Revolution, but the victory would never have been won without the cooperation of Baptists and Protestants. In fact, without the Calvinists leading the way, it is unlikely the Revolution would have even begun. We should never forget the contribution they made toward our freedom. By the same token, the Calvinists, with their strict moral code helped to weave the moral fabric that, till this very day, helps to define America. The French had a Revolution that followed on the heels of ours. Louis XVI almost bankrupted France helping finance our revolution. Then in 1789 the French people stormed the Bastille, and their revolution was under way. But that revolution turned out very differently. The American Revolution resulted in the freedoms we all enjoy. In spite of the faults of this nation, America is still the freest nation on earth. The French Revolution ended in The Reign of Terror, the very scandal of revolutions.

Fifty years after our revolution, a French political philosopher by the name of Alex de Tocqueville came to America intent on discovering what made the difference. Until the American Revolution, it was the rule, rather than the exception for revolutionaries to turn on each other- revolutions consumed themselves. The French Revolution did that; America's revolution did not. To be sure, there were differences among our Founding Fathers, serious differences. They squared off and did battle. Sometimes, arrogant, strong-willed, self-important men fought hammer and tong to have their own way. But in the end, for the most part, right prevailed. In the white-hot blaze of debate they hammered out the principles and the documents that made this nation great.

France had men just as qualified, just as bright, just as well informed in the art of governing. But, while in America adversaries wrote stinging articles, plotted, and called each other scurrilous names, in France they lined up their adversaries and chopped their heads off. They kept the headsman busy with the Guillotine, and it seemed the heads would never quit rolling.

What made the difference? How was it our Founding Fathers hammered out the United States Constitution, which became the wonder of the civilized world, at the same time the French made chopping heads such an attraction the public came to sit in the galleries and watch the heads roll.

De Tocqueville came to America to find out.

He wanted to learn the secret of America's greatness. He traveled over the country, talking with people, asking questions and listening. He went from town to town; he examined our system of government, our schools, our economic system. He could not find the answer to his question: what made America different; what made America great?

Then he visited America's churches. He found the pulpits of America "afame with righteousness," and learned firsthand what made America great. He went back to France and told his countrymen, "America is great, because America is good; and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great."

We have said all of that to get to this: At the time Alex de Tocqueville wrote that, the majority of the churches in America were Calvinistic churches.

Calvinism is a system flawed at its heart, and we will demonstrate in this book that it cannot be repaired. To those who are involved in that system the Lord says, "Come out of her my people that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." (#Revelation 18:4/) It is the duty of those who love the Lord and his truth to leave the system. The Lord has a church; that church is "the pillar and ground of truth" (1 Timothy 3:15), and it is the duty of every heaven born soul to search for it and find it (Matthew 6:33). But while the Calvinistic system is flawed, we do not deny that for generations here in America that same system embodied a strict Puritanism, a strict morality, that contributed much to the moral fiber of this nation. In this promiscuous age in which we live we could use a hearty dose of old fashioned Puritan values.

I do not mean to single out the Calvinists to the exclusion of others. Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians alike made their contribution to the moral underpinnings of America. But we must never lose sight of the contribution of the Calvinists. Even now, some of the leading warriors in the battle for Bible based values are staunch Calvinists. They continue to fight long and hard for those principles that must undergird any safe and sane society. We would not have anybody get the idea that, because we point out the fundamental unsoundness of the system, we have overlooked the priceless contribution the good and honorable people involved in that system have made to this nation, and to the nations of the world.

03 A Comprehensive System

A Comprehensive System

We must give Calvin his due. He produced a system which, from that day until this, has been the wonder of the religious world. But, as profound an impact as Calvinism has had on religious thought, few people seem to have any idea of the comprehensive and far reaching system it is.

Loraine Boettner was probably the best known Calvinistic writer of the twentieth century. In 1932 he wrote a book entitled *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*. It became a standard reference among students of Calvinism. His presentations are clear, comprehensive and to the point. He and D. Martin Lloyd-Jones probably gained more converts to Calvinism than any other writers during their lifetime.

Boettner writes, "In the minds of most people the doctrine of Predestination and Calvinism are practically synonymous terms. This, however, should not be the case, and the too close identification of the two has doubtless done much to prejudice many people against the Calvinistic system. The same is true in regard to a too close identification of Calvinism and the Five Points, as will be shown later. While Predestination and the Five Points are all essential elements of Calvinism, they by no means constitute its whole" (*The Reformed Doctrine....*, pg 7).

Boettner was right. Predestination and the Five Points are essential elements of the system, but if that is all anyone knows about the subject, he has very little idea of what Calvinism is all about.

It is our purpose in this short study to look, not just at predestination and the Five Points, but also at the various other principles which make the system what it is. It is our intention to look at how the system started, how it evolved, and how it was later arrested and radically changed. It will become readily apparent that the Calvinism we know today, even the Calvinism taught by its staunchest advocates, is a far cry from the Calvinism of Augustine and Calvin.

We will notice that, not only are predestination and the Five Points not the sum and substance of Calvinism, the Five points have never been the real driving force behind Calvinism. There are other principles that have had far more effect in spreading its power and influence than predestination and the Five Points ever had.

If we would study Calvinism, we must first define our terms. Since we are looking at Calvinism-the doctrine of John Calvin-we will allow his writings to control the question. We will look at the great Calvinistic confessions, the Westminster, Savoy, Belgic confessions, etc., but in the end we will allow Calvin to define his own system.

There are about as many notions of Calvinism as there are brands of automobiles. What one identifies as Calvinism, another insists is not Calvinism at all. In my old copy of Frank Mead's *Handbook of Denominations*, he refers to Southern Baptists as being moderately Calvinistic. In my new copy of Mead's work the reference to Calvinism is omitted. Since I am writing primarily for the Primitive Baptists, I believe it is proper to point out that most Primitive Baptists would say the

Southern Baptists are thoroughly Arminian. Most of them believe in the preservation of the saints; they call it eternal security, and a few of them believe (at least to some small extent) in total depravity. But, it is a rare Southern Baptist who would agree with the other three points: unconditional election, limited atonement, and irresistible grace.

There is very little agreement about what Calvinism is; everybody has his own formula. In order to discuss the question, we must have some bench mark, some way of identifying our subject. So for our purposes we will assume that Calvinism is whatever John Calvin says it is. As a general rule the professional theologians provide two neat little boxes, and they insist that, doctrinally, all Christians must fit into one or the other of those two boxes. If you are not an Arminian, you must be a Calvinist; those are the only choices-or so we are told. That is a great marketing ploy. We are told, "If you do not want to be one of them, you have to be one of us. If you are not an Arminian, you have to be a Calvinist; those are the only two choices." But those are not the only two choices.

Primitive Baptists have not generally allowed themselves to be packaged by the professional theologians. We insist we are different. We are neither Arminians nor Calvinists. We subscribe to a different system, which, for want of a better term, we call Bible doctrine.

Most people insist that if you believe God is sovereign, you are a Calvinist. And if you believe man is in charge, you are an Arminian. But it is not that simple. There are other systems which differ radically from either doctrine. Not many people would recognize the term Pelagianism if they heard it, but it is a system totally different from Arminianism or Calvinism. And it is just as fundamental and fully as widespread. Pelagianism teaches that man is not really depraved. Adam did not stand as our federal head. His sin only affected himself. Man is fully able to save himself. He does not need a Redeemer, and he does not need a revelation from God. Or so they say. There is no way you can make the Pelagian fit into either the Arminian or the Calvinist box. If you would judge what people believe by listening to what they say, you would think there may very well be as many Pelagians as there are Arminians or Calvinists.

Then there is Semi-Pelagianism. Again, most people never heard the term, but its adherents are different from the Calvinists, Arminians or Pelagians. The Arminian acknowledges that man is by nature totally depraved, but he still believes the sinner has sufficient ability to choose between heaven and hell. That is different from either Pelagianism or Semi-Pelagianism. The Pelagian denies that man is depraved. The Semi-Pelagian acknowledges that man is depraved-but not totally. The expression a little good in every man is classic Semi-Pelagianism, and that expression typifies much of today's religious thought. Semi-Pelagianism resembles Arminianism, but by its firm denial of total depravity, it sets itself apart from that doctrine. There are probably about as many Semi-Pelagians as there are Arminians. And then there is Sacerdotalism. That is the doctrine that salvation comes by observing the sacraments of the church. That is the doctrine of the Roman Catholic church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the various other liturgical churches. It is a system of doctrine distinct to itself, and it will not fit into any of the other four boxes. It resembles Pelagianism, as Semi-Pelagianism resembles Arminianism, but they are all separate and distinct systems.

It has been pointed out many times that, over the years, some of our best informed, and most highly respected ministers have referred to Primitive Baptists as Calvinists.

They were doing what we all do. They were using language people understand. They were referring to those who believe God is sovereign as Calvinists, and those who believe man is in charge as Arminians. People are used to dividing professing Christians into one of two groups- Arminians and Calvinists-and they did the same.

Those same writers often referred to every form of conditional salvation as Arminianism. They sometimes used the term Arminianism, when, to be precise, the doctrine was Pelagianism (works salvation), or Semi-Pelagianism. They could have been more precise, referring to Pelagians, Semi-Pelagians, and Sacerdotalists, etc., and they would have been more exact, but it is unlikely some of their readers would have understood them. So they used the language their readers used. In all honesty we must acknowledge that some of them actually were Calvinists, but generally when one of those writers used the word, it did not mean he subscribed to the doctrines of John Calvin. In this work, in order to establish what we mean by the term Calvinist, we allow Calvin himself to define the term. When we refer to Calvinism we are referring to that system as it was set forth by John Calvin, and his closest colleagues, and as it is set forth in the great Calvinistic confessions of faith: the Westminster, Belgic, and Savoy Confessions, the Canons of Dort, and the Longer and Shorter Westminster, and Heidelberg Catechism, etc. Not even the men who drew up those confessions of faith would accept some things Calvin taught, but when we come to those points, we will point out the difference. So, if we might repeat ourselves, for the purposes of this study we will assume that Calvinism is whatever John Calvin says it is. [Isaiah 4:1-6](#)
The Five Points

We have quoted our Calvinist theologian, Lorraine Boettner to the effect that the Five Points are not the entirety of Calvinism, but when anybody mentions Calvinism, that is the first thing that generally comes to mind. So we need to take a good look at the Five Points, and especially, we need to compare the Five Points of Calvinism with those five doctrines the Bible teaches regarding the grace of God. They are not the same. The Bible doctrine of salvation by grace can be easily broken down into five basic points: Total depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, and the Preservation of the saints: the so-called

T-U-L-I-P doctrine. The Bible teaches all five of those doctrines, and they summarize the doctrine of the Primitive Baptists with regard to the salvation of sinners. Much of our preaching is devoted to demonstrating those great truths.

Calvinism has its own five doctrines corresponding to those points, and it has become customary to refer to those points as The Five Points of Calvinism. When studying the Five Points, we need to keep two things in mind. First, John Calvin did not himself make any reference to the Five Points. For the most part, he did preach those doctrines, and much of the necessary material was drawn from his writings, but it was the Synod of Dort (1619) which, many years after Calvin died, arranged them into the Five Points formula.

Second, we need to know that, while on the one hand, those five points, as they were taught by Calvin and his followers, contain much that is scriptural and true, they also contain much that is totally unscriptural, totally untrue, and shock-ing to any heaven born soul. No system was ever more at war with itself than the Calvinism of John Calvin and the various Calvinistic confessions of faith. At one moment they can be as scriptural, and as comprehensive in their presentation, as it is possible for mortal men to be. They can take you to the very gate of heaven itself. We marvel at

their insight, their scholarship, their devotion to the scriptures. The next moment they can take you to the very depths of despair. At one moment they exhaust the language extolling the praise of God. The next moment they make claims so scandalous to the name of God, that you wonder how any person born of the Spirit would dare say such a thing.

We will show that, even though the five points do contain much that is clearly true, and even though much of the material was drawn from the writings of John Calvin, there is not so much as one of those points-as John Calvin taught them-that squares with the Bible. We will show that John Calvin would start with statements so clearly true, that no honest Bible student could deny them, and from that beginning, he would draw conclusions exactly opposite to the clear teaching of the Bible. The Bible teaches those five points in connection with the doctrine of salvation by grace, but John Calvin emphatically denied the doctrine of the Bible on every one of the Five Points. The doctrine of John Calvin is almost a mockery of the five points as they are taught in the Bible. The Five Points formula came about as the result of conflict between the followers of John Calvin and James Arminius in the Netherlands in the early 1600's. James (Jacobus) Arminius was a professor at the Leyden University. He was the source of the doctrine we call Arminianism. After Calvin and Arminius had both died, the followers of Arminius drew up a Remonstrance in which they petitioned the States General of the Netherlands to incorporate his doctrine into the system of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands. The States General called a synod (the Synod of Dort) to consider the matter. The synod rejected the request of the Remonstrants, and instead drew up the Five Points using Calvin's writings as their source. The Canons of Dort (1619) are the record of that decision. It settled the question of Calvinism versus Arminianism for the Dutch people, but it almost resulted in a civil war. The Canons of Dort limited itself to those Five Points, but in 1647, the English Parliament under the leadership of the Presbyterians adopted the Westminster Confession. It provided a more comprehensive statement of Calvinistic doctrine. Those documents continue to be the standards of the Presbyterian Church. In his Westminster Confession of Faith Study Book (2005) Joseph Pipa says, "All Presbyterian and Reformed churches have a secondary authority based on the scriptures. Presbyterian Churches have The Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechismsall officers must take an oath that they believe that the things taught in these documents are scriptural and that they believe them"

(pg. 13). Our Calvinist friends make much of their sola scriptura (scripture only) slogan, but it appears they do not mean a word of it. What they give with one hand they take back with the other. They have their list of secondary author-ities, and they require their ministers to swear by those secondary authorities. On the dust cover of The Westminster Confession of Faith, published by Free Presbyterian Publications of Glasgow, Scotland, we are told, "The Church of Christ cannot be creedless and live." The Bible is not enough; they must have their creeds, their confessions and catechisms to prop it up. The Presbyterians have the Westminster Confession and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. The Dutch and German Calvinists have what they call the Three Forms of Unity: the Belgic Confession, The Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. Then there are the Savoy and Augsburg Confessions. They all have their supplements to the Bible. That is one of the many ways in which our Primitive Baptists differ from the Calvinists. We believe, "The scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God and the only rule of faith and practice." We have no secondary authorities. We admit to no other rule, no other standard, than the Bible. From time to time persecution and false accusations have made it necessary for

Baptists to adopt confessions of faith-as explanations of their doctrine and practice. But Baptists have never adopted any confession of faith in the sense the Protestants have.

Those confessions were for the purpose of explanation only. They were meant as a defensive measure against the accusations of the Protestants. Protestants and Catholics consistently made the most ridiculous and shameful accusations against Baptist doctrine and practice, and they had no alternative but to put their principles on paper and have their leading ministers sign their names. But they have never adopted those confessions as secondary authorities. They have never considered that the Bible needed any supplement. In some ways those Five Points, as they have been taught by John Calvin and his followers, closely approximate the doctrine of the Bible, and a casual reading would convince the unwary they are the very truth of the gospel. But in other fundamental ways, those doctrines -as Calvin taught them-are not only different from the doctrine of the Bible; they are the exact opposite of Bible doctrine.

Total Depravity: To give a brief rundown of some points on which Calvin's Calvinism differs from the Bible, the Westminster Confession states in Chapter Six, "1. Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin, God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory. 2. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body. 3. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation. 4. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions." That is what the Bible teaches. God did permit (suffer) Adam to sin-he could have stopped him. Adam became corrupt and dead in sin, and he passed that corruption down to all his offspring. And we fully agree that "from this original corruption....do proceed all actual transgressions." It would be hard to find a Primitive Baptist who would argue with the Confession on those points. But that is not what John Calvin taught. Calvin taught that man is by nature depraved; but he did not teach that depravity was the source of his sinful deeds. He did not trace man's sinful conduct to his own depravity so much as he did to the will and decrees of God. He was sure that man did whatever he did-whether good or evil- because God predestinated him to do it. The Westminster Divines were followers of John Calvin; but they would not exactly go with him on those points. They taught the same doctrine, but they would not say it so bluntly as he did. John Calvin had been dead almost eighty years when the Westminster Assembly met. With all that time to think about it, the Calvinists had plenty of time to consider Calvin's doctrine, and reword it in a manner they thought was more acceptable. The Westminster Confession states that God permitted Adam to sin. But Calvin expressed his harshest contempt for those who claim that God only permits sin.

He taught that God controls every action man performs. He taught that if a man does any good thing, God causes him to do it, and if he does any wicked thing, God causes him to do that as well. In other words, if a man sins, he sins because God forces him to sin. Most Calvinists bristle at the charge their doctrine makes God the author of sin, but Calvin repeatedly said it in so many words. He gloried in the thought that God is the author of sin. Listen to these direct quotes.

“I have already shown clearly enough that God is the author [his word] of all those things which, according to these objectors, happen only by his inactive permission. He testifies that he creates light and darkness, forms good and evil (Isaiah 45:7); that no evil happens which he hath not done” (Institutes, Book I, Chap. 18, Sec. 3). You cannot charge Calvin with beating around the bush. Language could not be plainer. He is sure God is the author of every act-whether good or evil. If there is evil in the world, he is sure God did it. But Calvin is very careful to misquote the text. It does not say what he pretends it says. The text actually reads, “I form the light and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things.” The text is simple enough, if you just let it say what it says. The two clauses are parallel; they explain each other. How does God create darkness-by withholding the light. Darkness is simply the absence of light. As darkness is the absence of light, the evil under consideration is the absence of peace. God creates darkness by withholding the light; he creates this kind of evil by withholding peace. The text does teach that God “makes peace and creates evil,” but it is not moral evil that he creates. Peace is the gift of God. He makes peace, and he withholds peace. We will never enjoy peace unless he, in his mercy grants peace, and his withholding that peace is the evil under consideration. It is not the evil of sin and wickedness. It is the evil of the pain and suffering God sends as judgment on our sinful ways. The text is perfectly balanced, perfectly true, and so simple a little third grader can understand it-if you just let it say what it says. But John Calvin had no trouble insisting that if there is the evil of sin, wickedness, and degradation in the land, God is the cause of it. That is not a God honoring doctrine, to say the least.

Later in the same section he says, “The sum of the whole is this,-since the will of God is said to be the cause of all things, all the counsels and actions of men must be held to be governed by his providence; so that he not only exerts his power in the elect, who are guided by the Holy Spirit, but also forces [his word] the reprobate to do him service.”

He does not blush to teach that God “forces the reprobate to do him service.” Calvin would have us believe that if some reprobate abducts a little girl, if he tortures and rapes her, and buries her still alive behind his home, it is because (to use his language) “God forces the reprobate to do him service.” He would have us believe the miscreant would never have done any such thing if God had not forced him to do it. The Westminster Confession traces such conduct to the depravity of the man; Calvin traces it to the decrees of God. But there is more. “From the first chapter of Job, we learn that Satan appears in the presence of God to receive his orders, just as do the angels who obey spontaneously” (Institutes, Book I, Chap. 18, Sec. 1). He has no trouble in claiming Satan is as much a soldier in the Lord’s service as the angels are, and that he shows up at the throne of God to receive his orders for the day. He does make the distinction that the angels serve God spontaneously, but Satan must have his orders.

He goes on, “The manner and the end are different, but still the fact is, that he [Satan] cannot attempt anything without the will of God....We infer that God was the author [his word] of that trial of which Satan and wicked robbers were merely the instruments.” He leaves not the least room to doubt that he is convinced God is the author of every act that is performed, and Satan and wicked robbers are only the instruments by which God does his work.

Again, in Section 2, “If to harden means only bare permission, the contumacy will not properly belong to Pharaoh.... not that he intends to teach wicked and obstinate man to obey

spontaneously, but because he bends them [his exact words] to execute his judgments just as if they carried their orders engraven on their minds. And hence it appears that they are impelled by the sure appointment of God" (Institutes, Book 1, Chap. 18, Sec. 2).

He overloads the language to show that men sin because God causes them to sin. He refuses to allow that man sins by bare permission, or that he acts spontaneously, but he will have us believe they sin because they "have their orders engraven on their minds." According to him, Satan must appear before God to receive his daily marching orders but the wicked have "their orders engraven on their minds." As if that was not enough, he insists that God "bends them to execute his judgments," and "they are impelled by the sure appointment of God."

Finally, "Hence recourse is had to the evasion that this is done only by the permission, and not also by the will of God. He himself, however, openly declaring that he does this, repudiates the evasion. That men do nothing save at the secret instigation of God, and do not discuss and deliberate on anything but what he has previously decreed with himself, and brings to pass by his secret direction, is proved by numberless clear passages of Scripture" (Institutes, Book I, Chap. 18, Sec. 1). The 1948 Warfield Edition of the Institutes reads, "They therefore evade the difficulty, by alleging that it happens only by the permission, and not by the will of God; but God himself by the most unequivocal declarations, rejects this subterfuge. That men, however can effect nothing but what he has previously decreed, and determines by his secret direction, is proved by express and innumerable testimonies. What we have before cited from the Psalmist, that 'God hath done whatsoever he hath pleased,' undoubtedly pertains to all the actions of men."

He bristles at the thought that men sin when God permits them to do so. He would have us believe that, whatever men do, they do "at the secret instigation of God," that they sin, because God instigates them, prompts them, to do so.

He would have us believe that every wicked, lascivious, and brutal act that has ever been committed was done because God instigated the sin, bent the will of the perpetrator, and forced him to do it. The Westminster Confession is the most respected of all Calvinistic confessions, but not even the Westminster Assembly would follow Calvin that far. In Chapter 3, section 1, they say, "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established." The bottom line is still the same. The Westminster Divines still trace whatsoever comes to pass to the will of God. They still place all man's good and all his wickedness at the feet of God. They do their little song and dance to clear God of the charge they have themselves just made. In the second half of the section those same Westminster divines do their best to take the edge off the clear statement they have made in the first half. Their dodge does not change anything, but at least, they refuse to go with Calvin in his blunt claim that God forces the reprobate to do all they do. The Canons of Dort are, perhaps, a little less offensive than the Westminster Confession. In their first head, article 15, they say, "And this is the decision of reprobation, which does not at all make God the author of sin (a blasphemous thought!) But rather its fearful, irreproachable, just judge and avenger." They do not mention that Calvin taught the very doctrine they were repudiating, and it is obvious they did not have him in mind. How could they; he was their greatest source.

Blasphemy is a serious charge, and it is not a word I use lightly. I do not think I have ever before put the word on paper. But that is what the Canons of Dort call Calvin's doctrine, and since they are all in the same Calvinistic camp, it seems reasonable that we should take them at their word. As little satisfaction as I get from the word, I must confess that if the accusations Calvin makes against God are not blasphemy, I have no idea how a person would go about blaspheming. Someone will object that Calvin was not making accusations, and I am sure Calvin would agree. But his comments sound, for all the world, like accusations to me.

It would be easy for someone to conclude that if the god John Calvin has just described is the god he worshiped, he could not possibly have been a Christian, and Calvinism is no part of the Christian religion. It is certain the god he has just described is not the God of the Bible. The God we serve does not force men to abduct, rape and mutilate little girls. He does not bend their wills to fly airplanes into huge buildings full of innocent people. He does not instigate sin and wickedness. On some points Calvin, and Augustine before him, were as accurate and as scriptural as it is possible to be. On those subjects we must acknowledge they spent thousands of hours with their Bibles, and they reached logical and scriptural conclusions. Some of their arguments and conclusions have stood for ages.

But, while they borrowed much from the Christian religion, they also borrowed much from the pagan religions. When they talked about God being the cause of all the sin and wickedness in the world, both Calvin and Augustine were thoroughly pagan. Paganism is the worship of any God other than the God of the Bible, and the god Calvin described in the passages we have just quoted is not the God of the Bible. As we shall see in the pages to come, Calvinism is as indebted to pagan philosophy-and the Jewish Talmud- as it is to the Bible. It is a collection of much that is undeniably Christian, along with much that is pagan, and a hearty dose of Pharisaism/Judaism/Talmudism. Calvin does not quote the Talmud and pagan philosophers the way he does the Bible, but nobody who is acquainted with those three systems can fail to see that those sources shaped his thinking as much as the Bible did.

Unconditional Election: In Chapter 3, Section 3, the Westminster Confession reads, "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death." The Westminster divines were sure God created the elect for the purpose of saving them, and having them live with him in all eternity. Our Primitive Baptists have no quarrel with that. But when they go on to argue that God created the non-elect for the purpose of sending them to hell, we must part company. Notice they claim some are foreordained to everlasting death. They call that doctrine Double Predestination. On this point Calvin and the Westminster scholars were perfectly agreed. He was not satisfied with teaching that God elected his people, and determined to do all things necessary to bring them safe home to glory; he goes on to say that he also predestinated the non-elect to eternal damnation, that he created them for the express purpose of sending them to hell.

He says, "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" (Institutes, Book 3, Chap. 21, Sec. 5).

Again, "We say, then, that Scripture clearly proves this much, that God by his eternal and immutable counsel determined once for all those whom it was his pleasure one day to admit to

salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was his pleasure to doom to destruction” (Inst. Book 3, Chap. 21, Sec. 7).

I must confess that it sends a chill over me to hear anyone claim God created the non-elect for the sheer pleasure [his word] of seeing them burn in all eternity.

Lorraine Boettner agrees with Calvin, “The Reformed Faith has held to the existence of an eternal, divine decree which, antecedently to any difference or desert in men themselves, separated the human race into two portions and ordains one to everlasting life and the other to everlasting death” (The Reformed Doctrine....., Chap. 11, Sect. 1).

He laments the fact that Calvinism has been so largely rejected, and yet he admits the system teaches that “antecedently to any....desert in men themselves” God ordained a portion of the race to everlasting death.

It is true that he goes on to say, “The non-elect are simply left in their previous state of ruin, and are condemned for their sins,” but it is difficult to see how that makes any difference, when he teaches that every sin finds its cause in the same decree that ordains them to everlasting death.

Calvin teaches that God “forces the reprobate to do him service,” bends them and impels them to commit all the wicked things they do, then it is “his pleasure to doom [them] to destruction” for doing the very things he forced them to do in the first place. I confess if that describes the God of the Bible, I have been grossly mistaken. But you can be sure it does not describe the God of the Bible. Our God is known for his love, mercy, and grace. He lives in the heart of every heaven born soul and he prompts them to be like him.

Mister Boettner should not be surprised that so many people have abandoned a system which teaches God created some men for the pleasure of sending them to eternal damnation.

Limited Atonement: The Westminster Confession reads, “Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only” (Chap. 3, Sec. 7)

Again, this is not what John Calvin preached. Inconsistent though it was, Calvin preached Universal Atonement. It is hard to imagine how a person so logical, and methodical as he was could join Universal Atonement with his other doctrines, but that is exactly what he did.

I have searched in vain for any comment by Calvin on Limited Atonement. I have failed to find it. What I have found is an abundance of comments supporting Universal Atonement. In his Commentary, he writes on Colossians 1:14, “He says that this redemption was procured through the blood of Christ, for by the sacrifice of his death all the sins of the world have been expiated.”

On Galatians 5:12, he writes, “It is the will of God that we should seek the salvation of all men without exception, as Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world.” And finally on John 1:29, “He uses the word sin in the singular number, for any kind of iniquity; as if he had said, that every kind of unrighteousness which alienates men from God is taken away by Christ. And when he says, the sin of the world, he extends this favor indiscriminately to the whole human race.”

There is no way to make Universal Atonement agree with the other four points; but then, Calvin did not put the five points together in the first place. More than that, consistency was never one of Calvin's strong points.

Irresistible Grace: The Bible teaches that those whom the Father chose, and the Son redeemed, the Holy Spirit will call in God's own good time. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). The Westminster Confession teaches the Irresistible Grace of God, but in a very different way than the Bible teaches it. It reads, "All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased in His appointed and accepted time effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, etc." (Chap. 10, Sect. 1).

Granted, this language is open to interpretation. Some of those who defend the Westminster Confession tell us, that Word means the living Word, and enlightening their minds has reference to the enlightening which is the immediate work of the Spirit, and the preached gospel is not necessarily under consideration. Such an interpretation stretches the language, but in spite of the strain it puts on the language, we might admit the interpretation. But those who take that position seem never to have read the entire passage.

Three sentences later we read, "Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved; much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess. And, to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested" (Sec. 4). In this section they insist that those "not professing the Christian religion" cannot be saved. They are sure that if one does not profess the Christian religion he is going to burn. They go on to insist that, using such light as they do have, they may be never so diligent to live virtuous lives. Still, according to the Westminster Confession, they are going to burn if they have never professed the Christian religion.

Imagine some poor man with such bad judgment as to be born in a region the gospel has never reached. He is as kindhearted as any person you will ever meet. He loves his wife; he loves his children; he loves his neighbors. If he sees you in need, he would give you the very shirt off his back. His entire life is marked by love and compassion for his fellow man, but he lives and dies without hearing the gospel message, without hearing the name of Christ. This is the man our Calvinist friends describe as being diligent to frame his life according to the light he does have. According to the Westminster Confession, he is going to burn-because he never professed a religion he knew nothing about. The Westminster divines were not only willing to teach that God created the non-elect for the pleasure he receives in sending them to hell; they seem to take delight in twisting the blade in those they consider not to have been elected. If you do not accept their religion-if you do not agree with them-you are going to burn.

I would be glad for that good man to hear the gospel and delight in it; but I confess that I am not uneasy about his eternal destiny. If the man has genuine love for his fellow man, it is because God's Spirit lives in his heart. God has done his work in the heart of his child, without the help, or

the interference of the preacher. The Bible teaches clearly enough that “Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1 John 4:7). But our Calvinist friends will have none of it. They assure us that no one can be “saved in any other way whatsoever” than in “professing the Christian religion.” As for those the preacher never bothers to reach, “be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and that religion they do profess” they are still going to burn. A more hard-hearted, cold-blooded religion has never been known. That is just one of the many notions the Calvinists borrowed from Judaism. The Lord challenged those unbelievers in John, chapter five. He told them, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they that testify of me” (John 5:39). The Jews had the Bible; they had the oracles of God (Romans 3:1), and they thought that is where they got eternal life. They were sure if anybody did not have the Bible-if he did not know and believe what they did-he was going to burn. The Lord told them the scriptures were not the source of eternal life; it is the place of the Bible to testify of him. That is the doctrine of the Primitive Baptists to this day. Our Calvinist friends choose to differ with the Lord on that point. But what does it mean to profess the Christian religion? Is professing the Christian religion the same as believing the gospel? How much of the gospel must one believe in order to be a believer?

Must he believe all the gospel-most of the gospel-or only some principle contained in the gospel?

If he must believe all the gospel, who is there who knows and understands all the gospel? Is it not true that we continue to learn all our lives? What if he dies before he fully masters the gospel message? Or must he simply believe most of the gospel? Is that not another way of saying there is some part of the gospel it is not important that we believe? Which part of the gospel must we believe in order to profess the Christian religion, and which parts are not necessary to be believed? On many religious questions there are honest and sincere people on both sides of the issue. What about eternal security? Is the doctrine of eternal security part of the gospel? Must we believe that doctrine in order to profess the Christian religion?

If professing the Christian religion includes believing in eternal security, does it not leave out all those good and godly Methodists and Pentecostals who are vigorously opposed to the doctrine. Are we to believe all the Methodists and Pentecostals are going to burn, because they cannot get it straight about eternal security? Or is it, perhaps, not really important whether he believes that doctrine?

If eternal security is so unimportant, should we not, perhaps, quit talking about it, and limit our preaching to those points which absolutely must be believed in order to reach heaven?

What about the Five Points of Calvinism? Are they part of the gospel? Must a person believe the Five Points in order to profess the Christian religion? Most any Calvinist will acknowledge that the majority of professing Christians reject the Five Points, either in whole, or in part. If a person must believe the Five Points in order to profess the Christian religion, does that not mean that virtually all those who profess to be Christians are not really so, and they will burn.

Again, if a person may profess the Christian religion without believing the Five Points, not in their entirety anyway, would it not, perhaps, be best to quit talking about them, and only talk about the very least a person has to believe in order to reach heaven.

If a person can refuse that part of the gospel, what other parts of the gospel may a person reject and still profess the Christian religion?

If we reduce the subject to its lowest common denominator, and say professing the Christian religion means believing that part on which we can all agree, that presents a problem at the other end of the scale. Is believing Jesus is the Son of God sufficient to profess the Christian religion? We are told the devils also believe and tremble. Are we willing to reduce the formula to such a level we must strike hands with devils and recognize them as true believers?

If a person was baptized as an infant, does that constitute professing the Christian religion." What if his later life does not reflect that profession? How closely must his life correspond to the Christian religion before you can say he has made a proper profession? Are we to believe that one person whose life barely reflects the Christian religion is elect, because he was baptized in infancy, and another person, who lives the most exemplary life is non-elect, because he has never heard the gospel message?

We have already talked about the man born in a land where the gospel is never preached. He is the kindest, most loving person you would ever care to meet. He loves his wife, and children. He rises early and works late to provide for them. He would share his last crust of bread with someone in need. Are we to believe that, because he never made that public profession, he is going to burn, but another selfish, self-centered, person is elect and will live in heaven, because he was baptized in infancy, and his life loosely reflects the Christian religion. And still our friend Boettner is bewildered why "it is only rarely that we now come across those who can be called 'Calvinists without reserve.'" You would think anybody as bright as he was would have figured that out. This is another of those places where the Calvinists have never gotten it right.

Perseverance of the Saints: The Bible teaches that every heaven born soul is safe in the hands of his Maker. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my father's hand," (John 10:27-29).

Again, the Westminster Confession has a chapter which seems to teach the same thing, but it actually leaves us in doubt as to what it does teach. "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" (Chap. 17, Sec. 1).

If they had left it there, the statement would have been easier to understand. Notice they say the elect will "persevere" and never "totally, nor finally, fall away from the state of grace." If they were talking about persevering in a state of grace, we would not take the least exception. The Bible teaches that in the clearest terms.

But, they do not leave it there. In Sec. 3, they say, "Nevertheless, they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and for a time, continue therein...." (Sec. 3). They make it clear enough they are not talking about persevering in a state of grace; they are talking about persevering in a life of holiness. That is an entirely different matter.

Nobody can deny that, for a time, God's truly born again people do fall away from a life of holiness. The Bible teaches it, and our own experience teaches it. But the language they have now introduced raises the question: if a person departs from the proper path more than for a time, does that not indicate that he was probably never a child of God in the first place. That raises all sorts of other questions. How closely must a person follow the Lord to still be in the right way? Is absolute perfection required, or do those in the right way err from time to time, even when they are doing their best? If this language is correct, every person stands always in doubt of his salvation. Every time he errs, he must wonder if he is really a child of God, or is he only a nominal professor. The adversary could never have imagined a doctrine more calculated to destroy all the joy, and every sense of security, from even the most devout child of God. He must spend his life forever terrified that he is only a nominal professor. His previous experience means next to nothing. Every time he stumbles, he is terrified he is one of those nominal professors. He is left in suspense, hanging over the abyss. To him the house of God ceases to be the place of joy and rejoicing it once was. Rather than encourage him to spend his life on his knees, humbly serving his Maker, and praying for grace to do better, the preacher waves his shortcomings before him, and questions his hope of heaven. Does he measure up, or is he only an imposter? The assembly of the saints loses its joy. The preacher drags him down from Mount Zion, and leaves him at the foot of Sinai. He feels the earth shaking under his feet; the lightning flashes, the thunder roars, the black smoke of Sinai boils toward heaven, and he can feel the flames of hell nipping at his heels. The preacher warns him that if he does not persevere in holiness, he is not one of the elect. He is doing the best he can. He reads his Bible, he prays, he goes to church. Still, his life does not measure up. The very best he can do, it is not enough. He is forever in doubt. The more closely he follows the Lord, the more he realizes he is still falling far short. The assembly of the saints becomes a misery. The church becomes an icehouse. Preaching becomes a terror. The Bible becomes a sealed book.

One of two things happens. Either he spends his life in misery and terror, or else he escapes by becoming proud and arrogant.

He can convince himself he really does measure up after all. He is everything he should be. In fact, if everybody was as good as he is, the world would be a better place. He begins to look down on everybody around him. The Lord drew his picture in Luke, chapter eighteen.

"And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke 18:9-12). This man had no trouble with his assurance. He was sure he was not like other people; he was better than they were. He spent lots of time examining himself, and he was proud of what he saw. His only concern was that God did not realize what a fine person he was. So he spent his prayer time, pointing out what he was concerned God might not have noticed.

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 12:13-14). This man was aware of his shortcomings,

and he begged for mercy. But, even though he was fully aware of his shortcomings, he yet believed there was mercy available for him. He saw himself for the sinner he was, and the Lord for the merciful Savior he is. He was penitent, but he was not destitute. He yet believed God loved him and would forgive him. The Pharisee did not see himself as a sinner; he was proud of himself. And he did not see the Lord as a merciful Savior. He did not feel his need of a Savior. He just wanted the Lord to notice what a fine person he was. The penitent publican is the end result of the gospel, bearing witness in the heart of a born again child of God. The arrogant, self-righteous Pharisee is the end product of John Calvin and his doctrine.

05 Five Points of Fatalism

The Five Points of Fatalism

The Five Points, as John Calvin preached them, correspond to those points as Augustine preached them; but they do not correspond to the Bible. Calvin's doctrine contained much that is true; but it contained much that is diametrically opposite to the doctrine of the Bible. The reason for that difference is that Calvin started from a position exactly opposite to the Bible, and starting out opposite, it was certain that he would wind up on the opposite side from the Bible.

Calvin's starting point was fatalism. He insisted that God is the cause, the author, of every act that is performed- regardless of how good or how evil that act may be. He insisted that God forces the reprobate to do him service, that he bends the will of the sinner to do what he does, that he instigates every good deed and every sin.

Calvin's doctrine with regard to how people are saved is simply the working out of his fatalism in connection with the salvation of sinners. Every point has fatalism for its foundation.

He was sure that man is by nature depraved; but man sins because God predestinated that he would sin in that way and at that time. He says God elected a people to live in heaven, but he also chose a people to suffer in hell. He preached a Universal Atonement, but he is sure that only the elect will hear the gospel and believe; so only the elect will benefit from the atonement. He preached that all the elect will hear and believe the gospel, and persevere in a state of holiness, because he predestinated all the events necessary to bring that about.

Examine his doctrine as much as you will, and from any angle you will, and it still comes out the same. His entire system rests on his fatalistic foundation. It would be far less confusing if their Five Points had rather been called the Five Points of Fatalism. The doctrine of grace begins from an entirely different starting point. The doctrine of grace teaches the five points the Calvinist lays claim to. It teaches Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and the Preservation of the Saints. But it grounds those doctrines on the grace of God- it does not ground them on the doctrine of fatalism. The doctrine of grace teaches that man is totally depraved, but it teaches that sin came by man's transgression. "Wherefore as by one man's sin came into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned," (Romans 5:12). It does not teach, with John Calvin, that God predestinated Adam to sin. It does not teach that God predestinated every sin that has been committed since that day. And it does not teach, with the Westminster divines, that God manipulates man, and orchestrates circumstances and conditions, to bring about those sins he predestinated.

It teaches that out of that fallen race of mankind he chose a people for his name, and determined to do all things necessary to bring them safe home to heaven. It does not teach, with John Calvin and the Westminster Confession that, for the pleasure of seeing them burn, he predestinated the rest of mankind to eternal damnation. The doctrine of grace teaches that he simply left the rest of mankind where he found them. He did not take anything from them, and he did not provide heaven

for them. The gospel of grace extolls and magnifies the grace of God. It presents him as doing all things necessary for the salvation of his people. The Five Points of Fatalism imagines that God cannot do his work-that he cannot even know the future, unless he has predestinated every act that will ever happen, unless he manipulates and orchestrates all that comes to pass. It makes God the motivating force, the cause, the author, of every sin. The five points of the doctrine of grace present God as hating sin, forbidding sin, who will have nothing to do with sin, and will, one day, bring every sin into judgment.

06 The Arrogance of Calvinism

The Arrogance of Calvinism

Those principles most necessary to be known and understood about the gospel are simple. God told Habakkuk, "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables that he may run that readeth it" Habakkuk 2:2.

"And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" Isaiah 35:8.

"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew" Deuteronomy 32:2.

Notice that the text compares the truth to the falling rain. The easiest thing you will ever do is to get wet in a rainstorm. If you stay out there long enough, you will get wet. And if you stay in the Bible long enough, you will get wet from the gentle rain of gospel truth. For the humble, prayerful, obedient, child of God nothing could be simpler than learning enough of the gospel to satisfy your present need. You are not likely to become any kind of scholar, but you will learn enough of Bible truth to satisfy your need. But while that is true, there are some things connected with the gospel you will never learn—some things that are so far beyond your ability to comprehend, that you cannot understand them, and you certainly cannot explain them. We can usually understand the who, the what, the when, and the where. But when it comes to the how and the why of much that God does, we are almost always at a loss.

We cannot begin to explain how God spoke the word, and created the universe out of nothing; and if it was explained to us, we still could not understand what we had been told. The Bible teaches it, and we believe it, but it is beyond our comprehension to understand it.

We cannot understand how he will, one day, speak the word, raise our long decayed bodies, and put them back together again. We have no doubt he will do it, but we cannot begin to understand how.

We cannot understand how the spirit does its work in regeneration. God does it; we feel the effects, and enjoy the benefits; but we cannot understand, nor fully explain, how he does it.

We cannot understand why he chose to give the very best heaven had, to suffer, bleed, and die, to redeem lost sinners. It boggles our minds to think that God would pay such a price for the redemption of such worthless sinners as we know ourselves to be.

We could make a career talking about those questions that are beyond our comprehension. The point I am getting to is that we cannot know how God can know all that is going to be before it happens. He knows and, when he chooses, he tells us. That is one of the proofs that he is God. But we cannot understand how he knows.

We can explain that he is eternal. He is not bounded by time the way we are. With us there is a past, a present, and a future. But with God all is one eternal now.

We can explain that he is the beginning and the end. That is not to say that he is the beginning, and he will be the end. He is the beginning and the end-at one and the same time. He is-right now-the alpha and the omega, the first and the last. He is all of that at the same time. We can say all of that, and be right proud of ourselves. But after we have said it, we do not really know what we just said, because with us there is a past, a present, and a future. We cannot really comprehend anything that is not bounded by time the same way we are-regardless of our pretending that we understand. Being the timely creatures we are, we cannot comprehend how God can know everything that ever happen in the future. The simplest, and most honest, thing is for us to admit there are some things that are entirely beyond our comprehension. We are creatures of time, and we do not know everything. But our Calvinistic/fatalistic theologians will have none of it. With their keen intellect, their massive learning, their nearly encyclopedic reservoir of explanations and illustrations, they have it all figured out. They write their massive systematic theologies, with their almost infinitely subdivided topics, and sub-topics. And they fully explain every subject that comes under consideration.

God himself issues the challenge, "Canst thou by searching find out God; canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Job 11:7. And all over the room our Calvinist friends raise their hands, "I can," "I can," "I can."

They have put the Almighty under the microscope, and they are sure they have him all figured out; they know how he can foretell the future. They tell us God can foreknow the future, because, before he created the universe, he predestinated everything that would ever happen-both good and evil.

They tell us that if some reprobate abducts and mistreats a little child, it is because from all eternity God predestinated he would do that very thing, at that very time. They are sure God knows it will happen, because he orchestrates and manipulates all the surrounding events-all the second causes-to make it happen.

They remind us that God could have stopped it, if he chose to. And with that sickening, Calvinistic grin, they assure us that since God could have stopped it, and did not, that is proof positive he wanted it to happen. I have trouble recording the words-even as a quote from a heretic. It is totally beyond my comprehension how anybody can say the words, and expect somebody to believe it.

You and I cannot explain how God can foretell the future. We cannot explain why he tolerates sin in the world. I cannot explain why he puts up with all my own short-comings. I certainly cannot explain why he tolerates such sin and wickedness as there is in the world. But it is a simple matter to admit that I do not know everything. There is much I cannot begin to explain. But our arrogant Calvinistic theologians will have none of it. It would leave a huge hole in their system to admit there are some things they cannot explain. So rather than admit they cannot explain everything, they lay the cause of sin at God's feet. They tell us God predestinates everything, manipulates everything, orchestrates everything, so that everything falls out according to some grand plan, and that plan involves everything that will ever happen, from the rise and fall of mighty empires, to the formation of every tiny snowflake.

Rather than admit the obvious-that none of us knows everything-they charge God with all the sin and wicked-ness in the world.Such arrogance, such conceit, such foolhardiness, is beyond belief.
It patches the hole in their system, but at what a price.

07 Old Doctrine Repackaged

Old Doctrines Repackaged

Calvinistic writers trace Calvinism to Augustine of Hippo in the early fifth century. Augustine died in 430 A.D. John Calvin and the Protestant Reformers simply resurrected the doctrine of Augustine. But Augustine did not spin those notions out of thin air; the fundamental principles of Calvinism had been developing for centuries before Augustine came on the scene. Calvinism developed against the background of Judaism and the pagan philosophies of that day, and it drew many of its notions from those two systems. So if we would learn something of its origin and development, we must learn something of Judaism, and the philosophical thought at that time.

You might spend a lifetime studying every piece of religious and philosophical literature available, and regardless of however ancient, or however modern, your material may be, you will discover in all of it the same notions, and the same arguments. New features, new ideas, new eccentricities, are added; but the fundamental principles are always the same. Suffice it to say, the adversary constantly changes his face, but he never changes his ways. No really new religion, no new philosophy, no fundamentally new doctrine, ever comes on the scene. It is always a different version, a modification, a new combination of old doctrines. The Bible provides all the material you need to answer any false doctrine you will ever face. It will always be some variation of a doctrine that was faced by Christ and the Apostles. The first trials of the church came at the hand of their own countrymen, the Jews. After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. the Jews were no longer able to persecute. Before the Lord went away, he told the disciples, "They shall put you out of the synagogues, yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." They soon learned what that meant. The history of the church has been one long trail of blood. At the time of Christ's public ministry, the Jewish people had long since replaced the Law of Moses with what Paul calls the Jews' religion-with Judaism. Till this day Hillel, Shammai, and Gamaliel are three of the most revered names in Judaism. They developed Judaism to its greatest heights, and they all lived during the time of Christ and the Apostles. Jewish tradition was well entrenched, and they claimed the power of life and death over those who opposed their teaching.

During his public ministry the Lord was constantly harassed by the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the scribes-by unbelieving Jews. "The common people heard him gladly" (Mark 12:37), but the Pharisees and other religious leaders laid wait for him, "seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him" (Luke 11:54). They mocked him, ridiculed him, and plotted to kill him. They were not concerned whether what he told was the truth or not; they had no interest in the miracles he performed; they just wanted him dead. Finally they took him through a mock trial, and crucified him.

After his crucifixion, it was still the Jews, and Judaism, that most persecuted the early church. The Gentile authorities did not pay them much attention, but the Jews dogged their every step. No persecution was too harsh, no measure too underhanded. They were determined to wipe the church off the face of the earth, and to sweep the name of Christ from the pages of history.

Then in the year 70 A.D. the Roman army besieged the city of Jerusalem for five months; they starved the inhabitants into submission, overran the city, and burned it to the ground. Flavius Josephus records that a million people died during the siege, and one hundred thousand were sold into slavery.

Fifteen hundred years before, when God gave them the Law, he promised them great blessing, if they kept the Law. But he warned them they would suffer if they disobeyed. They had long since ceased to observe the Law, but in spite of the fact they despised the Law, and cast it behind their back, that Law was still in full effect. The Law would exact its penalty. In the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, God described in detail what they suffered in 70 A.D. They fell victim to the Law in all its fury. God did exactly what he had promised. The back of Judaism was broken. The Jews who survived were sold into slavery, and scattered to the four winds. The Jews would themselves become the hunted, the persecuted. God had promised, "And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth even unto the other.... And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life" (Deuteronomy 28:64; Deuteronomy 28:66). In that condition they could no longer harass and bedevil the Christians. But that brings on a curious question. Virtually every conflict of Christ and the Apostles was in a Jewish context. That is the constant theme, especially, in the book of Acts. Very nearly every attack was from the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes-unbelieving Jews. We are well informed of how Christians suffered at their hands.

Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D.; the Jews were scattered among the nations, and from that time until now, Christians have had little direct contact with Jews or with Judaism. Pharisee is a name we no longer fear. Most of us have never been inside a synagogue. Unless we have a Jewish doctor or lawyer, some of us from small towns may not even be acquainted with a Jew. We have conflict enough with Gentile detractors, but it is not often that a Jew dissects and attacks one of our sermons.

Since that is the case, why are the historical parts of the New Testament almost entirely given over to conflict between the early Christians and Judaism? Why are we told so much about the Pharisees and Sadducees? Why prepare us for battles we will never fight?

If we miss that question, there is not much of church history that will make sense. If we get that question right, it is amazing how simple church history becomes. The book of Acts is not out of date. We need every piece of information it contains. We need that information, because virtually every battle the Church has ever been called on to fight has been with those basic principles that go to make up Judaism. Our battles are not with Judaism itself; we have very little contact with Judaism. But most every conflict has to do with practices that have been borrowed from Judaism. That is the reason the New Testament provides so much material about Judaism. That is the place the major battles have always been fought. The fiercest battles in the early church were with those who wanted to merge Judaism with the Lord's church. That is especially the theme of the book of Galatians, but the material we need is spread throughout the entire New Testament. If the Pharisees could not destroy the church from without, they would subvert it from within. They would make the church like themselves. The enemies of truth found a solution. "If you can't whip 'em, join 'em." And that is what they did. The enemies of the truth began to join the church. In Acts chapter fifteen we read, "And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, Except ye be

circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). They wanted to make the church into a Jewish sect. They almost divided the church at Antioch, but Paul fought that battle and won it.

Later in the same chapter we read, “But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). Paul challenged them, “Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers, nor we, were able to bear” (Acts 15:10) Those Pharisees believed, but they did not believe as much as they should. They did not believe the grace of God was sufficient without their keeping the law-without carrying their traditions over into the church. This Pharisaism/Judaism sometimes crept in, and swept away whole churches. Hassell tells us, “The first fifteen Bishops (or pastors) of the church of Jerusalem were all circumcised Jews, and this church united the law of Moses with the doctrine of Christ” (pg. 367).

More often than not, it was a mixture of Judaism and heathen philosophy that was brought in. Paul warns us, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8). It was that merging of Judaism and pagan philosophy with the gospel that laid the groundwork for Calvinism, and destroyed so many churches in Augustine’s day.

08 Instructing Them With Meekness

Instructing them in meekness

“In meekness instructing those who oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth,” 2 Timothy 2:25.

We have said it several times before; but I believe it bears repeating at this point. In considering such a subject as this, we need to be very wary, and very careful, of our own motives. Every one of us still has that same carnal nature we brought into this world, and that nature can easily get the advantage of us.

Jeremiah warns us, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). Our own deceitful heart can easily turn a righteous zeal for truth into resentment, or even malice, toward those who are in error, and we cannot always tell when we cross that line. We can very easily slide from opposing falsehood to chastising and vilifying those who are in error. No doubt, there are those who advocate error, because they do not know any better. Paul talked about those who, “being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God,” Romans 10:9. We have Paul’s word for it that they did not know any better.

Paul also talked about those “who hold the truth in unrighteousness,” Romans 1:18. Regardless of anything else that may be involved in that verse, it does teach that a person may use the truth in an improper manner. If a person knows the truth, but uses that truth to maliciously attack his brother who may not know any better, it appears to me the person who uses the truth like a club may incur the greater guilt.

We will have some comments to make about the role the Roman Catholic Church has played in persecuting those who will not submit to their authority. The historians have made their point; the historical record is clear. There can be no doubt about what they did, especially during what is called the Protestant Reformation.

I realize I am repeating myself; but I believe this point bears repeating. We must oppose error, but we have absolutely no right to imply that our Catholic neighbors are responsible for what happened centuries before they were born.

We will have some comments to make about the conduct of John Calvin, and other leaders in the history of Calvinism. We will show that they inherited the persecuting ways of their Catholic teachers. We have a perfect right to point out that their doctrine led to their conduct, but we have no right to impute their misconduct to those in our day who answer to their name. The Protestants have done such an effective job of rewriting their history, that only the rarest of their people are aware of the scope and magnitude of their persecution of those who differed with them.

We will point out some of the doctrines of Judaism that have survived both in the Roman Catholic Church and in the various Protestant denominations, but there is a vast difference between

opposing the false religious system we call Judaism, and opposing the Jewish people. They are not at all the same thing. The Apostle Paul spent his life opposing Judaism, and yet, from the very core of his being he loved the Jewish people. We hear him saying, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved,"

Romans 10:1.

He could even say, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh," Romans 9:3. We should not imagine that he could wish himself-eternally- accursed from Christ. His eternal destiny is not under consideration. But if he was such an offense to the Jews that his being in the church was what kept them out, he would be willing to be sacrificed for their sake. Considering the joy he received from the church, and the great benefit he was to the church, I cannot imagine how he could have said anything more.

He was appointed to be the apostle to the gentiles, but he never lost that love and affection for his own people, and he always prayed for their benefit. We must be always on our guard that we never allow our opposition to false ideas to slide off into resentment for any people. If we do, we will surely suffer for it.

Paul recognized the errors of Judaism, and he rejoiced to be free from the Jew's religion," Galatians 1:13-14, but that did not in the least diminish his love for the people. Listen to Luke's account.

"And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles" Acts 21:10-11. Agabus was speaking by the Holy Ghost, and that is exactly what did happen, but listen to Paul's reply.

"Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus," (Acts 21:13). Paul recognized that the Jews were seriously in error. They had rejected their Messiah, and they were soon to suffer for it, but that did not diminish his love for them. He was ready to suffer and to die for his people. A person can oppose Judaism and still feel genuine affection for the Jewish people, just as he can oppose Catholicism and Protestantism and have genuine love for his Catholic and Protestant neighbors. We should always be aware that when any person harbors malice for any other person, or any other people, he harms himself far more than he harms the object of his malice. The story has been told a thousand times over of the two men who watched a condemned man being led to the gallows. One of them called him "a miserable wretch," and he was right; the man had been convicted of a horrible crime, and he deserved to die. His companion knew more about the grace of God-and about his own corrupt nature-and he said, "Yes, he is; but," he said, "there, but for the grace of God, I go."

If we have a brother who advocates error, we need to realize that, were it not for the blessing of God enabling us to understand the truth, we could be just as much in the dark as he is. God deals in judgment with those who are malicious in their opposition to error as surely as he deals in judgment with those who advocate error. We must oppose error, but we must do it with compassion and love for the erring brother.

09 Human Philosophy versus the Gospel

Human philosophy versus the gospel

If we would learn something of the difference between the gospel and human philosophy we need to first consider the nature of New Testament Church, the ministry, and the gospel itself. It is by comparing those three with what otherwise passes for the church, the ministry and the gospel that the difference between philosophy and the gospel- between Calvinism and the gospel -becomes apparent. The hallmark of the gospel is simplicity. Paul tells us, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to youward" (2 Corinthians 1:12)

Again he says, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:9). In those two sentences Paul summarized the warfare that has gone on in the church for almost two thousand years now. On the one hand there is the simplicity and godly sincerity of the gospel message. On the other hand there is the fleshly wisdom, and philosophy of men. That has not changed for two thousand years. Till this day there is the godly sincerity of true spiritual worship opposed by the arrogance and vain deceit of men's traditions and rudiments, or rules.

It is significant that the gospel first went out during the heyday of Greek philosophy. The greatest of the Greek philosophers lived about 500 years before Christ. Their ideas had time to dominate the Roman world by the time of Christ and the apostles. It has been said the Romans conquered Greek armies; but Greek philosophers conquered Roman minds. The society of the first century A.D. was largely what Greek philosophy had made it. The first Christian ministers went out preaching the simple message of the gospel. Against the powerful background of Greek philosophy and Jewish tradition, they preached in the power of the spirit, and they gained converts by the tens of thousands. The gospel swept over the Roman Empire. The Greek philosophers were brilliant and well educated. They were cultivated, articulate and powerful speakers. They devoted their entire time to seeing and hearing some new thing, and they could overwhelm their audiences with their learning. With all their military might, even Roman armies stood in awe of them.

Christian preachers were none of those things. Most of them were tradesman, and laborers, and farmers, and fishermen. They knew little or nothing of philosophy or logic or rhetoric. They were very much like the people they preached to. They had to earn their own livelihood to feed their families. They were not polished speakers, and sometimes they butchered the language. But when they stood up with the fear of God in their hearts, tears in their eyes, and a tremble in their voice, they told the simple message that, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." They told of sin and salvation, of hope and redemption, of resurrection and a better day to come-and they reached the hearts of heaven born souls.

All over the Empire sinners were converted by the thousands, and the philosophers could do nothing but stand by, wide eyed and slack jawed. With all their fine spun eloquence they could not match that kind of preaching. The people deserted their pagan religions. About the year 107 A.D., Pliny wrote the Emperor Trajan that the pagan temples were almost desolate. The Judaizers and philosophers were left out; the people were leaving them in droves. They wanted to be part of the action; but they wanted no part of such preaching as that. It did not fit their idea of how people ought to receive instruction, and it left them more than a little embarrassed.

They had no idea it was that spirit-filled, Bible based, God-fearing, preaching that was emptying their temples. They were determined to be part of this new wave, but they would remake the gospel and the church in their own image. Their greatest success came in the year 180 A.D. In that year Pantaenus, a “converted heathen philosopher,” founded the Academy at Alexandria. Clement, another “converted heathen philosopher,” followed him in 189 A.D. The most famous of the Alexandrian teachers was Origen. He and Clement are two of the most often quoted of what the Roman Catholics call the Ante-Nicene Fathers. Origen headed the school from 202 until 232. The school operated for 215 years and closed in 395 A.D.

Hassell tells us, “The last teacher was Didymus, in A.D. 395. The two objects of this Alexandrian school were to prepare people, especially the young, for the church, and to prepare talented young men to preach. The number of students was very great, and it is said that many eloquent preachers were sent out from this school” (pg. 365). They were ashamed of what they considered to be a rough-hewn, uneducated ministry. That contempt for a God-called, spirit filled ministry in favor of polished, educated orators has marked the false church in every age of the church. And, by the same token, it is that kind of humble, heart-felt preaching that has been the hallmark of the church.

Paul tells us, “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to youward,” (2 Corinthians 1:12). A person does not have to be a mental giant to understand the gospel, and rejoice in it. In its simplicity and godly sincerity the gospel is sufficient to feed, to edify, and to comfort any heaven-born soul.

Paul says again, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God,” (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). That was Paul’s outlook, and he bids us to be followers of him (1 Corinthians 11:1). But the reformers at the Academy had no intention of following Paul. They were determined to be part of the action, but they would remake the church, and the gospel, to match the philosophy they had always known.

10 Judaism and Paganism brought in

Judaism and paganism brought in The Alexandrian reformers did not remake the church; they could not remake the church. The Lord promised, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell (in this case the Academy at Alexandria) shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). The reformers were not able to remake the church-but they were able to produce their substitute for the church. In every day and age, the adversary has had his alternative to the Lord's prescribed way of worshiping him. Abel brought his offering of "the firstlings of the flock." It prefigured the Lamb of God, which should suffer and die to put away our sins. Cain followed an alternate path, and the Lord rejected his offering. It did not matter that he brought an offering, and it did not matter that he brought it at the right time, and to the right place. It was not the offering God required, and God would not accept it. At God's instruction, Moses threw his staff on the ground and it turned to a serpent. The Egyptian sorcerers had their own response. Later, God sent out his prophets, and the false prophets were right behind them. The adversary has always had his alternative to God's ministry, God's church, God's way.

There had always been those who would pervert the church if they could. "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage," (Galatians 2:4). The false brethren at Alexandria followed in the footsteps of the false brethren in Galatia of over one hundred years before. They were not satisfied with the church the way the Lord set it up, and they would remake it in their own image. They would produce their own anti-church. It would have enough characteristics of the true church to deceive the unwary, and many a humble and sincere child of God would be taken in. But, at heart, it would be the exact opposite of the church.

Hassell writes, "As the woman divinely clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars, and persecuted by the Dragon (Revelation 12:1-17.), represents the true church, so the woman humanly arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, and sitting upon the scarlet-colored beast, and having upon her forehead the name Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth, and drunken with the blood of the saints, represents the false or apostate church with her daughters-whether Roman, Greek or Protestant-not loving Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, but giving its affections to worldly idols - corrupted by tradition and wealth." (pg 256).

It is a source of grief that so many humble, God-fearing, children of God are caught up in those assemblies. Many of them are as sincere, and as honest as any person who ever lived. To them the Lord says, "Come out of her my people that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4). In these comments we pray that God will give us the grace to avoid saying anything that would injure the tender feelings of those precious children of God.

Hassell continues his account of the Academy. "Religion was gradually blended with and superceded by philosophy. Judaism and paganism were kindly brought in; and a broad, liberal, eclectic system, adapted to accommodate and reconcile all parties was devised" (pg 365) In those

seven words we have the key to the perversion of the Christian religion: "Judaism and paganism were kindly brought in." The Academy at Alexandria finally accomplished what the Judaizers had been trying to do for generations. They combined this eclectic combination of Judaism and paganism with their idea of the Christian religion. Eclectic just means you take a little from here and a little from there, depending on what suits your fancy. With that combination of Judaism, paganism, and some Bible doctrine they put together the framework of what, over the centuries, developed into the Roman Catholic Church. That is exactly what Catholicism is, a combination of those three systems. In order to understand what the Academy accomplished we need to first know what Pharisaism/Judaism taught. Keep in mind that when we refer to Judaism we are not talking about the Law of Moses. Sometimes even the best of writers talk about those who added the Law of Moses to the gospel, when it was not the Law they added at all; it was Judaism. The two are not the same. The Law of Moses had long since ceased to be practiced by the Jews when John the Baptist appeared on the scene. When Paul refers to his own life prior to his Damascus Road experience, he does not refer to his service under the Law. He says, "For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jew's religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jew's religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers," (Galatians 1:13-14). Notice that he says nothing about the Law of Moses; he was not serving under the Law. He calls it the Jews' religion. In the original language the word is judaismo-Judaism. He repeats it twice in two verses, so we will not miss it. The Jews had forsaken the Law and replaced it with Judaism-the Jews' religion.

Judaism is a parody-almost a mockery-of the Law of Moses. It does teach much that was contained in the Law, but its primary purpose has always been to explain away the Law and set it aside. It is their way of justifying themselves in violating the Law. They replaced the doctrine of God with "the commandments of men." That is the way the Lord explained it.

"Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9). To understand something of what happened, we need to look at some basic doctrines of Judaism. Those doctrines are not all that is involved in Judaism, not by any means; but they are five of the most distinctive features of the system. They are the doctrines it is most necessary to understand, if we would understand what Judaism is all about.

We will see later that those five doctrines-borrowed from Judaism-set the course for Catholicism and Protestantism for the last 1600 years. There is no way to understand Catholicism and Protestantism without viewing them from the vantage point of Judaism. But before we get to those five doctrines, we need to look at another of the doctrines of the Pharisees. One of the most fundamental doctrines of the Pharisees, and the doctrine most basic to their entire system, was fatalism. Granted, what one writer affirms, another denies. Every false doctrine is like that; no false doctrine is ever consistent with itself. But most Pharisees were convinced that God predestinated everything that would ever be done by men or devils. The Pharisees' brand of fatalism was like the Absolutism of our day. Alfred Edersheim records, "But the Pharisees carried their accentuation of the Divine to the verge of fatalism. Even the idea that God had created man with two impulses, the one to good, the other to evil; and that the latter was absolutely necessary for the continuance of

this world, would in some measure trace the causation of moral evil to the Divine Being. The absolute and unalterable pre-ordination of every event, to its minutest details, is frequently insisted upon. Adam had been shown all the generations that were to spring from him. Every incident in the history of Israel had been foreordained, and the actors in it-for good or for evil-were only instruments for carrying out the Divine Will” (The Life and Times of the Messiah, pg 317).

He goes on, “But there is another aspect of this question also. While the Pharisees thus held the doctrine of absolute preordination, side by side with it they were anxious to insist on man’s freedom of choice, his personal responsibility, and moral obligation....It was, indeed, true that God had created the evil impulse in us; but he had also given the remedy in the Law” (ppg 318,319). This absolutism, this notion that God gave man a law, forced him to break it, and held him responsible for doing what he was forced to do, is only one of the doctrines held in common by the Pharisees, by Augustine, and by John Calvin.

11 Then Other Five Points of Calvinism

The Other Five Points of Calvinism

Calvinism is a clever merger of Judaism, pagan philosophy, and some Bible doctrine. That fact will become increasingly clear as we go along. But before we get to that, we need to point out those other Five Points which, I am convinced, have always been the real force behind the original spread-and ultimate demise-of Calvinism.

Calvinists have much to say about the T-U-L-I-P doctrine, and that doctrine does summarize much of their doctrine. But the T-U-L-I-P expression with regard to Calvinism can be confusing. The Bible teaches Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and the Preservation of the Saints. Calvinism also teaches those five points, but we already pointed out that Calvinism teaches them in a very different way than the Bible does. For that matter, that formula has never been the real force behind Calvinism. Armed only with the T-U-L-I-P doctrine Calvinism has never been able to hold its own in the market place of ideas. The T-U-L-I-P doctrine, as Calvin taught it, has never been generally accepted, except when it has been advanced by a state religion, and enforced by the power of the sword. Stripped of those advantages, it has always been reduced to a religious curiosity. The real force behind Calvinism has always been what I call the C-A-C-I-P doctrine. That is simply an acrostic for those five doctrines, which, first, Augustine, and then, Calvin and the Protestant Reformers, borrowed from Judaism. Those doctrines are:

Confessions of faith, and decrees of Councils, as supplements to the Bible.

Authority to change whatever does not fit (sprinkling instead of baptism, etc.) Church/State Union to force uniformity.

Infant baptism to gain members before they can decide for themselves.

Power of the sword to enforce compliance.

During and following the Protestant Reformation, Calvinists were able to use their Church/State Union, and the Power of the Sword, to enforce Infant Baptism, and compulsory church membership. With those advantages they spread their influence over the Western World and beyond. With those weapons they could arrest, imprison, torture and sometimes kill, those who refused to be converted. Without them they could not hold their own. In 1791, the Congress of the United States adopted the Bill of rights with its guarantee of religious freedom, and Calvinism immediately began to fall apart-first in America and then in the rest of the world.

Without those weapons they could not convince good and honorable people the God of heaven is the cause of all the wickedness in the world. They could not convince them God creates people for the pleasure of seeing them burn. Their Confessions teach it, but they could not convince the people. In spite of occasional periods of interest, Calvinism has been in retreat ever since.

12 The Talmud and the Confessions

The Talmud and the Confessions

Since we are tracing the roots of Calvinism to its source in Judaism, we must take a look at what Judaism teaches-or perhaps we should say, what it taught in Augustine's day.

If a person would learn about Judaism, there are any number of books available. Perhaps the best known authors are Flavius Josephus and Alfred Edersheim. There are any number of others, most of them written by devout Jews in defense of Judaism. But it is not necessary to go to the bookstores to learn about the nature of Judaism, and it is not necessary to wade through the Talmud. The Babylonian Talmud alone runs to 22 huge volumes. That is far too much to read just to learn a few simple facts. Much of the New Testament is given over to recording the persecution, and crucifixion, of Christ by the Jews-by the devotees of Judaism. And in doing so, it gives a sufficient account of what they believed.

1. First, they had a kind of reverence for the scriptures bordering on superstition. They were sure that was where they got eternal life. The Lord corrected that notion. He told them it was the role of the scriptures to talk about him. "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me" (John 6:39). Their scribes were, like Apollos, mighty in the scriptures (Acts 18:24). They numbered every word and every letter. They bathed themselves before they would sit down to transcribe any part of the text. They would not correct more than the tiniest number of typos in their work. If they made more than the smallest number of mistakes, they did not correct them; they destroyed the work and started over. Of all the charges the Lord made against them, he never once charged them with corrupting the manuscripts. But with such a superstitious regard for the scriptures, they were still convinced the scriptures by themselves were not enough. They had a huge body of oral traditions which they taught alongside of, and sometimes in opposition to, the Law. The Lord said they taught for doctrine the commandments of men (Matthew 15:9). They consider the Talmud to be equal to, if not superior to, the Torah (their name for the law).

Like Judaism, Augustine recognized the Bible as an authority, but he also recognized the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils. The Nicene (325 A.D.) and the Constantinople Councils (381 A.D.), had already met in his day. Catholics regard the decisions of the first four Ecumenical Councils as inspired and infallible.

One thousand years later, Calvinists would prepare such documents as the Westminster, Savoy and Belgic Confessions, and the Canons of Dort as their secondary authorities to supplement the Bible, and they still require their ministers to swear their allegiance to those confessions. In that, Calvinism with its Confessions of Faith and Decisions of Councils is very much like Judaism.

Baptists have never seen the need for supplements to the Bible. For that reason they have never adopted confessions of faith in the manner the Reformers have. But in the 1600's and 1700's they put out a spate of confessions.

Those confessions of faith were totally different from the Protestant confessions. They were never intended to be supplements to the Bible, and they were not intended to be standards of doctrine. They were purely a defensive measure. In order to justify their treatment of the Baptists, the Reformers made the most outrageous charges against them. They accused them of baptizing people naked, devil worship, conniving at human sacrifice, plurality of wives, plotting to overthrow the government, etc. They used every means available to inflame the masses against them. The Baptists hoped that by issuing a clear statement of what they believed, and how they worshiped God, they could get the Reformers to stop torturing and killing them. They enjoyed very little success; the Reformers already knew what they believed. It was their existence they resented.

There are those in our day who imagine those Baptists put out their confessions voluntarily, but we have their word for it, they would never have put out a confession if they had not been forced to do so. In the preface to the second volume of his four volume history, Thomas Crosby tells us, "And the rather, because they declare, 'they are forced against their whole minds to publish it, for the clearing of their innocency in such things.'" Notice that he quotes them as saying they were "forced against their whole minds to publish it."

Crosby lived during the time those confessions were being issued. His father in law, Benjamin Keach, was one of the three leading Baptists in England. The other two were Hansard Knollys and William Kiffin. All three of them signed the Second London Confession. It seems reasonable to think the signatories of those confessions were better aware of their own motives than those who try to second guess them in this day.

They issued those confessions, because their very lives, and the safety of their families, depended on it. They did it in an effort to get the Protestants to stop tormenting them. They intended for them to be defensive measures; they did not intend for them to be any kind of secondary standards.

2. The second doctrine the Calvinists borrowed from Judaism was the Authority to change whatever they did not like about the Bible standard. That was one of the charges the Lord made against the religious leaders of his day.

One of the commandments is "honor thy father and thy mother." It is our place to respect and provide for our parents. Their tradition set that commandment aside, and pretended that anything they did for their parents was simply a gift; it was not necessary for them to do it. But the Lord said, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition" (Matthew 15:3-6).

Augustine claimed the same right to make such changes as he thought necessary. He substituted the baptism of babies for the baptism of believers. Calvin and the Reformers would continue that tradition. They claimed the right to change sprinkling for immersion where immersion was not convenient, because of weather, etc.

Augustine and the Catholic party finally prevailed, but it was only after they had closed literally thousands of Donatist churches, killed many of their preachers, and confiscated their meeting houses.

13 Church and State Union

Church/State Union

3. Judaism provided a form of Church/state union with the High Priest as the supreme leader. But somebody objects, was that not exactly what God provided under the Law of Moses? No, it was not. Under the Law they did have church/state union-but it was with God at the head. The High Priest was not God. They had long since rejected God as their king. God told Samuel, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Samuel 8:7). The church/state union of Judaism was of purely human origin. It began in the period between the Old and New Testaments. Hassell records (pg. 166) that Judas or Aristobulus, the son of John Hyrcanus, was the first to reign as priest-king about 106 B.C. His grandfather was Mattathias, the founder of the Maccabean dynasty. About that time there was much struggle and infighting both between the Jews themselves, and against the Syrians, under Antiochus Epiphanes, and later against the Romans. There were enormous changes going on among the Jews, and it is uncertain whether Aristobulus can be credited with establishing the arrangement.

What is certain is that, under the occupation of the Romans, the High Priest was allowed to exercise a kind of lordship over the people, based on their own laws and traditions, so long as they did not try to overthrow their Roman conquerors, and so long as they did not impose capital punishment. If they wanted anybody executed, they had to deliver them to the Romans (John 18:31). Up to that point, church and state were one.

Both Augustine and Calvin insisted the church should be allied with the state, and the government should have the power to enforce religious decisions. Til this very day the Westminster Confession (Chap. 23, sec. 3) still claims the right of the civil magistrate to suppress heresy, and to see to it that church ordinances are "duly settled, administered, and observed," in other words to prosecute those who will not submit to their authority. It is only the First Amendment to the Constitution that prevents them.

14 Circumcision/Infant Baptism

Circumcision/Infant Baptism

4. The fourth practice Calvinism copied from Judaism was Infant Baptism-as a substitute for circumcision. God provided circumcision as a covenant with Israel, but they perverted the practice, as they did so many things. Many years before, God had given circumcision as a sign to Abraham that he was righteous. "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised" (Romans 4:11). Circumcision did not make him righteous; it was a sign that he was righteous.

Circumcision was a seal of righteousness to Abraham only; it was not a seal of righteousness to anybody else. Many of those who were circumcised were not righteous. Some of them were unspeakably wicked. To them it was a sign they were the natural male offspring of Abraham, and as such, they had a right to the natural benefits that belonged to the offspring of Abraham-so long as they obeyed the Law given. It did not guarantee heaven to anybody. But they began to look to circumcision for salvation. It was circumcision that separated them from other nations, and they thought that made them superior. They were sure salvation reached as far as circumcision reached. Circumcision gave them a monopoly on God; if you were circumcised, you were safe; otherwise you were doomed.

Paul put an end to that notion. "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgression the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" Romans 2:1-29.

First, Augustine, and later the Protestant Reformers perverted baptism, as Judaism had perverted circumcision. The Jews looked to circumcision for salvation, and insisted that salvation only reached so far as circumcision reached. If one was not circumcised he was doomed.

Augustine preached that baptism took the place of circumcision. The Law called for babies to be circumcised; therefore babies ought to be baptized. Judaism taught that salvation reached as far as circumcision reached; Augustine taught that salvation only reached as far as baptism reached, and he pursued to the death those who refused to submit their babies for baptism.

More than anything else, believers' baptism-as opposed to infant baptism-marks the boundary line between the Lord's church, and the world's counterfeit-between the bride of Christ and the scarlet woman (Revelation 17:1-7). To put it in simple terms, the Lord commanded his people to repent and be baptized. Augustine and his Catholic party said, "We will have you killed if you do." It is

impossible to imagine Augustine and his Catholic party were engaged in anything less than all out war against the Lord and his people. With no other persuasion than the power of the Spirit the Lord's ministers call on believers to repent and be baptized. Until the First Amendment put a stop to the practice in America, the opposite system used the power of the sword to prevent believers' baptism and force infant baptism on their subjects.

15 The Power of The Sword

The Power of the Sword

5. The fifth point Calvinism patterned after Judaism was the Power of the Sword. They were so sure of their superiority, they thought they had the right to persecute, torture, and kill those whose preaching they counted to be a threat. The Lord said, "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2). He is talking about Jewish synagogues, not pagan temples. This is Judaism under consideration. The religious leaders were alarmed at the preaching of Stephen, and they arrested him, and brought him before the council. While he preached to the council, "All that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15).

They saw his face; the evidence of God's presence was clear, but it made no difference with them. The high priest questioned him, and he delivered a sermon that should have brought them to repentance, but when he finished his speech, we read, "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And said, Behold, I see heaven opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord. And cast him out of the city, and stoned him" (Acts 7:54-58).

Both the attitude of Paul before his Damascus Road experience, and the attitude of the Jews toward Paul after he began to preach, illustrate the mindset of Judaism. They were sure they had the right to persecute, torture, and kill those whose doctrines they counted to be a threat.

"And the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul....And Saul was consenting to his death....As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison," (Acts 7:58; Acts 7:1; Acts 7:3). At that time Paul was still called Saul. He got his first taste of Christian blood that day, and he would never lose that appetite until his experience on Damascus Road. When he could find no more Christians in Jerusalem he went to the high priest for authority to pursue them wherever they might be found. "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem" (Acts 9:1-2).

"And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders; from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished" (Acts 22:4-5).

"I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison,

having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities” (Acts 26:9-12).

Before the Lord appeared to him, Paul was the hero of the Jews. He was the rising hope of Judaism. He was so exceedingly mad against the Christians, he had them arrested, beaten, imprisoned, and whenever possible- executed.

After he began to preach the gospel they treated him in the same way. Three times they beat him with rods; five times they laid thirty nine stripes on his back (2 Corinthians 11:24-25). When he went back to Jerusalem, they tried to kill him, and they would have done it, if the Roman soldiers had not rescued him. He got away that time, but they still pursued him, hoping to do away with him.

Augustine claimed that same power of life and death, and he applied to Honorius and Theodosius, the emperors of the Eastern and Western Roman Empire for authorization to use force, lethal force if necessary, against the Donatists. From all we can learn of the Donatists, they taught essentially the same doctrines the Primitive Baptists teach today. They would not recognize infant baptism; they believed baptism should be limited to believers. They refused to recognize the baptism of the Catholic party. (At that time the Catholic party had not entirely coalesced into the Roman Catholic Church as we know it.) If someone came to the Donatists from the Catholics, they required them to be baptized. The Catholics said they rebaptized them. The Donatists said they only baptized them; their first baptism was not valid.

One of the reasons they would not recognize Catholic baptism was that many of the Catholic preachers were openly immoral. They insisted wicked preachers could not perform valid baptism. Augustine claimed the wickedness of the preacher did not affect his ability to baptize.

Donatists insisted they were the true church and the Catholic party was not. For these doctrines and others, Augustine pursued them, closed their churches, and claimed their meeting houses for his own party. He had their preachers banished from the land, and if they persisted in returning, he had them executed. It was because of that the Donatists charged him with making martyrs of their preachers.

One thousand years later, John Calvin, Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformers would claim that same power of life and death over those who would not submit to their authority. They pursued untold numbers to their death. The only reason they did not destroy as many as the Catholics did is that they never gained as much power for as long as Rome did.

16 The Ancient Writers on Infant Baptism

The Ancient Writers on Infant Baptism The historical record is clear enough that infant baptism did not exist in the earliest ages of the church. We already pointed out that this book will be more a collection of quotes from capable writers from the past, than it will be comments by me. These writers are far more capable than I am, and I am sure the space will be much better used by simply giving those brethren room, than it would be by providing too many comments of my own. Listen to some of these writers on the subject of infant baptism, keeping in mind that infant baptism has always been the mainstay of both Romanism and Calvinism.

“It is plain, says Dr. F.A. Cox, ‘from the writers of this [second] century, who will be allowed to have been the earliest next to the apostles, as Barnabas, Hermes, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp, and yet not one of these speaks of baptism being administered to infants’” (Orchard ppg 14,15).

“This evangelist [Luke] declares, Luke 1:3, that he had perfect understanding of all things, from the very first; and in Acts 1:1, says, his gospel stated ‘all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was taken up.’ Yet no allusion is made to the infant rite; we cannot, therefore, assert its existence in the church of his day, without impeaching Luke’s veracity” (Orchard pg 15).

“Clement, the schoolmaster and innovator, presided over a school at Alexandria, to whom we shall again refer. He observes, on the ordinance, ‘The baptized ought to be children in malice, but not in understanding; even such children who, as the children of God, have put off the old man with the garments of wickedness, and have put on the new man’ (Orchard pg 26).

“The absence of infant baptism, during the first centuries, is fully acknowledged by so many of the most learned among the Pedobaptists, that it is quite unnecessary to copy their assertions. Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Tatian, Minucius Felix, Ireneus, and Clement of Alexandria, constitute the Christian writers of this second century; who so far from directly speaking of infant baptism, never once utter a syllable upon the subject” (Orchard pg 27).

“....that adults were the only proper subjects of baptism, because fasting, confession of sins, prayer, profession, renouncing the devil, and his works, are required of the baptized,” “The soul is sanctified, not by washing, but by the answer of a good conscience-baptism is the seal of faith; which faith is begun and adorned by the faith of repentance. We are not therefore washed that we may leave off sinning, but because we have already done it, and are already purified in our hearts....There is no distinction between the catechumens and believers, they all meet together, they all pray together, they all hear together” (Tertullian, quoted by Orchard pg 33).

“Dionysius of Alexandria, writing to Sextus, Bishop of Rome, testifies, that it was their custom to baptize upon a profession of faith” (Orchard pg 35)

“Arnobius, Professor of Rhetoric at Sicca, says, ‘Thou art not first baptized, and then beginnest to affect and embrace the faith; but when thou art to be baptized, thou signifyest unto the minister thy

desire, and makest thy confession with thy mouth” (Orchard pg 35).

“Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, says, ‘Our Lord did not slightly command to baptize; for first of all he said, teach and then, baptize, that true faith might come by teaching, and baptism be perfected by faith” (Orchard pg 39).

“Jerom or Hierom, a presbyter in Dalmatia, observes on Matthew 28:19. ‘They first teach all nations, then, when they are taught, they baptize them with water; for it cannot be, that the body should receive the sacrament of baptism, unless the soul have before received the true faith.’ He declares, ‘that in the eastern churches, the adult only were baptized;’ also, ‘that they are to be admitted to baptism to whom it doth belong: viz., those only who have been instructed in the faith.’ He also appealed to his auditory, and remarked, ‘When you were baptized, did you not swear allegiance to Christ, and that you would spare neither father nor mother for her sake” (Orchard pg 378).

“Basil, bishop of Ceasarea, addresses his hearers with, ‘Do not demur, and loiter, and put off baptism, when you have been from a child catechized in the word-are you not acquainted with the truth?’ He declares, ‘One must believe first, and then be sealed with baptism.’ ‘Must the faithful be sealed with baptism? Faith must needs precede, and go before.’ Again, ‘None is to be baptized but the catechu-mens, and those who are duly instructed in the faith.’ He observes, ‘Faith and baptism are two means of salvation nearly allied, and inseparable; for faith is perfected by baptism, and baptism is founded on faith...and the confession which leads to salvation goes before, and baptism, which seals our covenant, follows after.’” (Orchard pg 40).

“Gregory, Bishop of Nazianzen, says, “There are three sorts who do not receive baptism;-the impious and vicious, who have no relish for it; others delay for liberty to sin; the last are those who cannot receive it, because of their infancy, or some accident,” and “None were baptized of old, but that did so confess their sins” (Orchard pg 43).

“Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, speaking of baptism, says, “There are three questions propounded, and three answers or confessions made, without which none can be baptized” (Orchard pg 44).

17 The Council of Nice, and the rise of Antichrist

Constantine, the Council of Nice, and the rise of Antichrist

John tells us of the antichrist. "Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us," (1 John 2:18-19).

Antichrist is not an individual we should expect at some distant time in the future. John tells us there were many antichrists in his day. Anti- simply means in opposition to. Whatever, or whoever, openly opposes Christ is antichrist. The Alexandrian reformers were anti-Christ. They were opposed to Christ, as they were opposed to the church, and to the gospel. Those in John's day went out. In trying to remake the church, the antichrists at Alexandria went out from the Lord's church, and set up their own anti-church.

Paul tells us about the rise of the man of sin. "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). The three major events in the development of antichrist, and the manifestation of the man of sin, were (1) the establishment of the Academy at Alexandria (2) the triumph of Constantine and the Council of Nice, and (3) the rise of Augustine of Hippo. The Academy laid the groundwork for the rise of Catholicism, and provided a huge supply of trained and polished young orators to advance the cause.

Constantine came to the throne in 306 A.D., and received full imperial power in 314. He made the Catholic party the state church, and at the Council of Nice in 325, he provided them with an organization, a hierarchy, and a creed. He "deprived the Donatists of their churches. This persecution was the first which realized the support of a Christian emperor, and he 'went so far as to put some of the Donatists to death'" (Orchard pg 88). The second major development in the rise of antichrist was the council of Nice in Bithynia in Asia Minor in 325 A.D. The conflict that gave rise to the synod was a dispute between Alexander and Athanasius on one side, and Arius and Eusebius on the other side, over the doctrine of the Trinity.

Arius insisted that Jesus was not fully God, that he was originally created from nothing, that he was subject to change, that he did not fully know the Father, nor himself, and so on. No Christian can accept the teachings of Arius. If Jesus is not fully God, then all who worship him are idolaters. The Council decided in favor of Alexander and Athanasius, and the doctrine of the Trinity, and banished Arius. They issued what has come to be known as the Nicene Creed.

Virtually all the literature dealing with the Nicene Council focuses on the question of the Trinity. Great amounts of writing has been devoted to their handling of that question, and you would get

the idea that is all that was involved. But any time the adversary makes a loud noise in the East, you should take a moment time to see what is happening in the West-and out of sight. The council was summoned by Constantine, and held under his authority. He was in attendance, at least, part of the time. Eusebius's editor records, "At the signal which announced the entrance of the emperor, all arose, and he appeared in the midst of them, his purple robe, resplendent with gold, and precious stones, dazzling the eyes of the beholders" (Preface to Eusebius' History pg 15). That does not seem to describe an assembly of humble followers of Christ. The editor goes on to say that at the imperial banquet "the guards and soldiers, disposed in a circle, were stationed at the entrance of the palace with drawn swords. The men of God passed through the midst of them without fear, and went into the most private apartments of the royal edifice" (pg 27). It is easy to imagine the emperor was accompanied by an armed guard with drawn swords, but I have some difficulty in thinking the guests were not somewhat intimidated by those drawn swords. At any rate, it was against that background the council did its work. That council was the organizational meeting of the Catholic Church, and its resolutions serve as their fundamental documents. Until then, they had been the Catholic party, and they claimed the Catholic name; now they began to be a truly separate organization. They were not yet Roman Catholic; but they were as Catholic as they would ever be.

We cannot point to any one date, and say this is where the Roman Catholic Church began. Romanism has been a constantly unfolding and developing force that continues even today. The elements that developed into Romanism were already present in Paul's day. He tells us, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work, only he who now letteth will let until he be taken until he be taken out of the way" 2 Thessalonians 2:7. That mystery of iniquity is still unfolding. Infant baptism began in Augustine's day. The doctrine of purgatory began with Origen and Augustine; but Gregory (595-604 A.D.) was the first to make practical use of it. Boniface III was the first called Universal Bishop in 606 A.D. In 648 A.D., Theodore I assumed the title of Sovereign Pontiff. The temporal power of the pope began with Stephen III in 748. The doctrine of transubstantiation began with Paschasius Radbert in 831 A.D. At the Council of Constance (1414-1418 A.D.) Martin V declared himself to be infallible. In 1854, Pius IX declared the doctrine of Immaculate Conception. So even though the Roman Catholic Church is still developing, the Council of Nice was Catholicism's first truly organizational meeting. It gave Catholicism its organization, its hierarchy, and its creed. Since that council is so fundamental to the rise of the man of sin, it seems advisable that we take time to notice what the meeting did accomplish. The deliberations of that synod were some of the most significant in the history of religion, or of the world. The Creed itself was modified several times over the next sixty years, and in addition to the Creed, there were added the Synodical Letter, and more than eighty Canons. Those Canons spelled out many of the fundamental principles that have guided the Catholic Church ever since that day. The Nicene Creed reads, "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of his Father, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance (homoousion) with the Father. By whom all things were made, both which be in heaven and in earth. Who for us men and for our salvation came down and was incarnate and was made man. He suffered and the third day he rose again, and ascended into heaven. And he shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost, etc...." Up to that point, so far, so good. It would be hard to find any evangelical Christian who would disagree. But it goes on,

“And whosoever shall say that there was a time when the Son of God was not, or that before he was begotten he was not, or that he was made of things that were not, or that he is of a different substance or essence, or that he is a creature, or subject to change or conversion—all that so say, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes them.”

Again, no one can properly dispute that the doctrines the creed denies are false and should be rejected; but it is also clear that the council begins to show its teeth in the way it anathematizes those who disagree.

Also, no one can deny that this council usurps the authority of the local church. The New Testament recognizes no higher ecclesiastical authority than the local church. This usurping of authority will become even more apparent as we go along.

Notice also that they identify themselves as the Catholic and Apostolic Church. They had been claiming the catholic name long before the Nicene Council convened. They claimed they were the one catholic (universal) church, and all outside their number were heretics.

Later versions of the Creed also presumed to set the date for observing Easter. The Lord never gave any command to observe Easter, much less a command as to when it should be observed. But the observance was an important consideration to the Catholics. Almost 300 years later, Pope Gregory sent Augustine of Canterbury to England to insist the Britons observe Easter at the authorized time. They refused and the Saxons slaughtered them by the thousands. The various canons of the Council of Nice are even more telling than the creed they issued.

Canon IV had to do with priestly celibacy. Every effort was made to adopt a rule requiring strict celibacy of all priests, but Paphnutius insisted that it was too much to require men to leave their wives, if they were married before they were ordained. It was finally decided they could continue to live with their wives, but if a priest was not already married at the time he was ordained, he must remain celibate. After the older priests died, it was possible for them to enforce celibacy on the priesthood in general.

Paul prophesied of this action by the Nicene Council in his letter to Timothy. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter time some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry....” (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

It is hard to imagine how Paul could have condemned these Nicene Catholics any more sharply than he did. He said they would (1) depart from the faith, (2) give heed to seducing spirits, and (3) doctrines of devils, that they would (4) speak lies in hypocrisy, and (5) their conscience would be seared with a hot iron. He leaves us no room to doubt what he thought of the Nicene Council, and that almost 300 years before the fact.

Canon VI gave the bishops of Alexandria, Rome, and Antioch, jurisdiction over the churches in their respective areas. The supreme authority had not yet been settled on Rome, but it later would be. They were as Catholic as they would ever be, but, at this time, they were not yet Roman Catholic.

Canon XIII has to do with extreme unction, prayers offered over the dying.

Under threat of excommunication, Canons XV and XVI forbade bishops to move from one area to another. The early ministers were sent forth by the Spirit (Acts 13:1). But, following those seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, which Paul warned against, the council usurped the office of the Holy Spirit, and presumed to tell preachers where they could go.

Canon XIV has to do with licensing of monks.

Canon XVIII has to do with their hierarchy. It established levels in the ministry; the deacon was the lowest level in the ministry, the presbyter was above the deacon, and the bishop was above the presbyter.

Canon XIX required any Paulianist who joined their number to be rebaptized. Over the centuries they burned untold numbers of Dissenters who placed the same requirement on those joining them.

Canon XX required that prayers be made standing, not kneeling.

Canon LXXIII had to do with monasteries and abbots.

Canon LXXIV had to do with sisters, widows, and deaconess [nuns] residing in monasteries.

Canon LXXVI had to do with the proper attire of monks and nuns.

We are determined to limit the size of the book. So we are only able to list a very few of the regulations adopted by the Nicene Council. But this should be sufficient to show it was a Catholic body, and they had fully departed from the simplicity of the New Testament. At the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. the charge was made that the Canons were forged. It has never been denied that those involved with the Council and its documents continued to tinker with them, at least, until the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. There are, today, several different versions of the Nicene Creed itself, but since the Council of Nice, the Council of Chalcedon, and the people who tinkered with the Creed for the next 60 years, were all part of the Catholic party, it is difficult to say who should determine what was their own tinkering, and what was forgery. At any rate, forgery or not, the Nicene Creed and its various canons have continued to guide the Roman Catholic Church until this very day.

18 Constantine after the Council of Nice

Constantine after the Council of Nice The Roman Catholic Church has ever since insisted the deliberations of this council, along with the next three Ecumenical Councils are infallible. When the assembled bishops went their ways, Constantine lined their pockets, and instructed them that they should live peaceably with each other. But it does not seem that he followed his own advice.

Hassel records, "It requires not the spirit of prophecy to anticipate the effects which must flow from the disgraceful proceedings of this general Council, though Constantine himself wrote letters enjoining universal conformity to its decrees, and urged, as a reason for it, that 'what they had decreed was the will of God, and the agreement of so great a number of such Bishops was by inspiration of the Holy Ghost.'"

"This Council laid the foundation for a system of persecution of a complexion altogether new - professing Christians tyrannizing over the consciences of each other, and inflicting torture and cruelties upon each other far greater than they had ever sustained from their heathen persecutors."

"The emperor's first letters were mild and gentle, but he was soon persuaded into more violent measures; for, out of his great zeal to extinguish heresy, he issued edicts against all such as his favorite Bishops persuaded him were the authors or abettors of it; and particularly against the Novatians, Donatists, Valentinians, Marcionists and others, whom, after reproaching them with being 'enemies of truth, destructive counselors,' etc., he deprived of the liberty of meeting for worship either in public or private places; and gave all their oratories to the orthodox church."

"And, with respect to the discomfited party, he banished Arius himself; commanded that all his followers should be called Porphyrians (from Porphyry, the heathen philosopher who wrote against Christianity); ordained that the books written by them should be burnt, that there might remain to posterity no vestiges of their doctrine; and, to complete the climax, enacted that if any should dare to keep in his possession any book written by Arius, and should not immediately burn it, he should no sooner be convicted of the crime than he should suffer death. Such were the acts of the last days of Constantine. - W. Jones"

"How unreasonable for the Emperor Constantine to suppose that he could keep down pride, envy and jealousy among his Bishops, when at the same time he was enriching them and elevating them to the highest distinctions in Church and State! And how unreasonable to suppose that he could put down and forever extinguish the spirit of free inquiry by a decree of State!"

"Constantine's leading motive was evidently one of political expediency and personal aggrandizement. When he undertook to unite Church and State, and constitute the kingdom of Christ into a kingdom of this world, he made a great mistake, and was found pandering to Antichrist rather than serving Christ, who most emphatically declared before Pontius Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world." (Hassell ppg 383,384) The Council of Nice reached the right conclusion with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, but being right on that single point is not

sufficient to identify the Catholic party as being a true church. Hassell goes on to show that the conduct of that element during the period immediately following the Council rather identifies their party as the man of sin.

“In the year 366 Liberius, Bishop of Rome, died, and a violent contest arose respecting his successor. The city was divided into two factions, one of which elected Damasus to that high dignity, while the other chose Ursicinnus, a Deacon of the church. The party of Damasus prevailed, and got him ordained. Ursicinnus, enraged that Damasus was preferred before him, set up separate meetings, and at length he also obtained ordination from certain obscure Bishops.”

“This occasioned great disputes among the citizens as to which of the two should obtain the episcopal dignity; and the matter was carried to such a height that great numbers were murdered on either side in the quarrel - no less than one hundred and thirty-seven persons being destroyed in the very church itself!”

“But the very detail of such shameful proceedings is sufficient to excite disgust; and enough has been said to convince any unprejudiced mind of the absurdity of looking for the kingdom of the Son of God in the Catholic Church, as it now began to be denominated. The mystery of iniquity which had been secretly working since the very days of the Apostles (2 Thessalonians 2:7), had nevertheless been subject to considerable control, so long as paganism remained the established religion of the empire, and Christians consequently compelled to bear their cross by patiently suffering the hatred of the world, in conformity to the Captain of their salvation.”

“But no sooner was this impediment removed by the establishment of (a nominal) Christianity under Constantine than the Man of Sin, the son of perdition, began to be manifest. Men were now found professing themselves the disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus, yet walking after the course of this world, ‘lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God,’ - ‘having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof’

(2 Timothy 3:3-5).”

“And, as this state of things continued to increase in progressive enormity, until it ultimately brought forth that monstrous system of iniquity denominated ‘MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH’ - described by the prophetic pen as ‘the habitation of devils - the hold of every foul spirit - the cage of every unclean and hateful bird’ (Revelation 17:5; Revelation 18:2)....” - W. Jones” (Hassell pg 384-386).

It was this Catholic state church that gave rise to (Saint) Augustine of Hippo. During the next generation he would be the preeminent advocate of the developing Catholicism, and the most bitter enemy of the household of faith.

19 Augustine of Hippo

Augustine of Hippo The third major development in the rise of the man of sin was the appearance of Augustine of Hippo. The Council of Nice did its work in 325 A.D. Seventy years had passed by the time the Academy closed in 395 A.D. The Donatists suffered sporadic persecution during that time, depending mainly on whether there was an Arian or an Athanasian emperor. Augustine was ordained in 391, four years before the Academy closed. He was appointed bishop at Hippo in 396, and published his Confessions in 398. So his rise exactly coincides with the demise of the Academy.

Augustine was especially suited for the work he did. He was a born genius. His writings fill several large volumes, and they continue to be republished after 1600 years. There are very few writers who are still being studied after that long a time.

He was as much a philosopher as he was a preacher. Among many other things, he laid the foundation for modern psychology, and his works are still being studied from the point of view of the psychologist. Unlike most psychologists, he started his inquiry with the doctrine of original sin, and human depravity. Not many modern psychologists will acknowledge either one, and that cripples their entire system. With those two principles as a starting point, he was able to produce a profound and wide ranging system of psychology. Much of his Confessions is given over to the subject. He did that 1500 years before Sigmund Freud, but even til this day, few, if any, psychologists can equal his insight into the human psyche.

He had a vast knowledge of the scriptures. Regardless of the subject under consideration, he always had an array of proof texts he could call into service. Whether the text proved his point or not, he could convince his followers they were on solid Bible ground. But as well known as his life and legacy are, he remains a mystery. When I was searching for the Lord's church, I spent considerable time studying his books. I was still a teenager fifty years ago, when I first struggled, line by line, through his Confessions. At last count, I had nine of his huge volumes in my library. His early experience and struggles of mind are such reading as can sometimes move one to conclude that this is a heaven born soul. But he had a darker, much darker, side. He had political skills that would have made Machiavelli proud. He could manipulate and persuade the emperors of Rome and Constantinople. He got those proud and arrogant men to issue the decrees he used to arrest, torture, and banish those preachers, who would not submit to his authority. When all else failed, he had them killed. The Academy worked out the merger between pagan philosophy, Judaism, and their idea of the Christian religion. They educated young ministers and sent them out to propagatate their new doctrines. But while Clement, Origen, and the other teachers at the Academy worked out the system, it was left to Augustine to use the political and military power of the Empire in support of the new system, and force it on the people.

Orchard writes, "In 412 Cyril was ordained bishop of Alexandria. One of his first acts was to shut up all the churches of the Novationists, and strip them of everything of value. Augustine, supported by a kindred spirit in Cyril, exercised all his influence, and consequently the edicts procured

against the Donatists, were now of a more sanguinary [bloody] character.”

“The Catholics found by experience, that the means hitherto used had been ineffectual against the Donatists; they now prevailed on Honorius and Theodosius, emperors of the east and west to issue an edict, decreeing, that the person re-baptizing, and the person re-baptized, should be punished by death. In consequence of this cruel measure martyrdoms ensued.”

It was left to Augustine to establish the battle lines along which he and his Catholic party would wage war against God and against the saints. Infant baptism-as a substitute for believers' baptism-would be that battle line. The Lord made baptism the required manner to publicly profess faith in him. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19). First teach them, then baptize them. If one has not been taught, he is not to be baptized.

“And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him” (Luke 7:29). The text could not make it any clearer that the boundary line between justifying God, and rejecting the counsel of God's water baptism. The Lord made believers' baptism the turning point, the boundary line, between gospel obedience and disobedience. That was the one act of submission God required, and the only response he would accept, as the initial public profession of faith. That being the God-appointed turning point between gospel obedience and disobedience, that was where Augustine gathered his forces and drew the battle line. He provided infant baptism as a substitute for believers' baptism, and he would not allow the baptism of adult believers. God required converts to be baptized in water as their initial public profession of faith, and Augustine and his Catholic party were determined to see them dead, before they would allow it. At the point where God required submission, Augustine drew the battle line, and it is at that same battle line- between believers' baptism and infant baptism-that Augustinians/Calvinists til this day still wage war against God and against the saints.

20 The Origin of Infant Baptism

The Origin of Infant Baptism

There is not the first line about the baptism of babies in the New Testament. The first undisputed instance of infant baptism was in 370 A.D.

Orchard records, "There is not one record of the baptism of a child till the year 370, when Galetes, the dying son of the emperor Valens was baptized by order of a monarch who swore he would not be contradicted" (Orchard pg 37). Except for two disputed instances, there is no record of the previous baptism of any infant.

Well over three hundred years after Pentecost, the Catholic party first advocated the baptism of babies. 1100 years later, the various Protestant Churches did the same, but it can be proven by their own documents, and by the decisions of their own Councils, that infant baptism did not begin until the time of Augustine. If he was not the father of the practice, it clearly began in his time, and he was its most powerful advocate. Space will only allow us to list a few of those conciliar decisions.

315 A.D. "The council of Neocessarea, in the sixth canon, saith, 'That confession and free choice were necessary to baptism'" (Orchard pg 46). A baby does not exercise free choice. No infant baptism in 315 A.D.

365 A.D. "The council of Laodicea required notice from the person who intended to be baptized, and resolved all should be instructed before they received it; and determined that the baptized should rehearse the articles of the creed" (Orchard pg 46). Babies cannot rehearse the articles of the creed. No infant baptism in 345 A.D.

383 A.D. "The council of Constantinople decreed that certain persons should remain a long time under scriptural instruction, before they receive baptism" (Orchard pg 46). For over 300 years, only those who professed faith in Christ, and a desire for baptism, were baptized. Then in 396 A.D. Augustine was ordained, and everything changed.

401 A.D. "The fifth council of Carthage, in canon 76, declares children ought to be baptized" (Orchard pg 47). In 415 A.D., Augustine presided over a council that anathematized those who denied that babies should be baptized. "The difficulty of establishing infant baptism, even among the licentious clergy and people of Africa, suggested to Augustine the expediency of calling together a number of his brethren, which he effected at Mela, in Numidia. Amidst ninety-two ministers, Augustine presided; he, with them in this assembly, since called a council, issued the following manifesto of their charity to dissenters, 'That it is our will that all that affirm that young children receive everlasting life, albeit they be not by the sacrament of grace or baptism renewed; and that will not that young children, which are newly born from their mother's womb, shall be baptized to the taking away original sin, that they be anathematized'" (Orchard ppg 97,98) In order to persuade their own followers to submit their babies for baptism, Augustine and his party

promised eternal salvation-if the babies were baptized-and perdition if they failed.

“Another assembly of divines was convened the same year [415] at Carthage, to enforce the rite, and occasion its universality if possible. The council solemnly declared, ‘We will that whoever denies that little children by baptism are freed from perdition and eternally saved, that they be accursed’” (Orchard pg 98). In order to advocate infant baptism, Augustine did what every pedobaptist must do; he based the forgiveness of sins on baptism.

“Augustine’s view of original sin led many to inquire how it [original sin] could be taken away from those who could not believe; the answer was, that sin was removed in baptism: consequently, this view of baptism drove him into pedobaptism, and infants became as eligible in his view, as minors and youths had been in the last century. Augustine, to enforce his views of infant salvation by water, called an assembly of which we shall speak hereafter” (Orchard, ppg 45,46).

“In 412, the Baptists were banished as heretics. In 413, Innocent sent letters of advice to various ministers. In the same year, the Baptists, for rebaptizing, were sentenced to death.”

“In 413 A.D. Augustine prevailed on Honorius and Theodosius the emperors of the east and west to issue an edict, ‘that the person re-baptizing and the person re-baptized, should be punished with death.’”

“In 416, a council at Mela, accursed all those who denied forgiveness to accompany infant baptism, and in 418, a council at Carthage enforced the same curse. Augustine, Cyril, Innocent and others, concurred in its expediency, Rob. Res. 151.”

“They borrowed the sword of the magistrate, to enforce what their arguments and views could not do, Wall, i.p.111. The sword, and the infant rite have always been companions,Rob. Bap. 438 and 450; and the early advocates accursed the parents who withheld the blessing from the child. Its support by the sword has called the Baptists to extreme sufferings, but they are additionally convinced of its origin from its companion and defense, and know that every rite defended by the sword shall perish by the sword” (Orchard pg. 61). The introduction of infant baptism gave Augustine and the Catholic party what they were looking for. It gave them the numerical superiority over the Donatists, and more important than that, it gave them an issue on which to wage war against them.

“The establishment of this rite by these severe censures, in time, raised the catholic community into numerical importance, and by patronizing the infant cause, the bishop of Rome became a father (papa) to the church. His authority was allowed or disallowed by the adoption or rejection of this rite....Consequently they all have advocated, and enforced by fire and sword, the sanctifying ceremony in opposition to the Baptists in every age. Every national establishment, as a daughter or division of the Romish establishment, adopts the measure as the best palladium to its constitution.” (Orchard pg 99).

Augustine was the first to claim the authority of Christ in waging all out, unrelenting, war against the saints.He taught the Catholic party the art of forcing religion by the power of the sword, and those lessons were handed down for the next 1000 years. During the Dark Ages, the Roman Catholic Inquisition drew rivers of blood from those who would not bring their babies to be baptized, or who allowed a dissenting minister to baptize them by immersion after the Catholic

Church had baptized them as infants.

“Gibbon remarks on these edicts, that ‘three hundred bishops, with many thousands of the inferior clergy, were torn from their churches, stripped of their ecclesiastical possessions, banished to the islands, proscribed by law, if they presumed to conceal themselves in the provinces of Africa. Their numerous congregations, both in cities and in the country, were deprived of the rights of citizens, and the exercise of religious worship. A regular scale of fines, from ten to two hundred pounds of silver, was curiously ascertained according to the distinctions of rank and fortune, to punish the crime of assisting at a schismatic conventicle; and if the fine had been levied five times, without subduing the obstinacy of the offender, his future punishment was referred to the discretion of the imperial court. By these severities, which obtained the warmest approbation of Augustine, great numbers were reconciled to the Catholic Church; but the fanatics (or faithful) who still persevered in their opposition, were provoked to madness and despair.’”

“Augustine owned, the city of Hippo had been full of conventicles, till he procured penal laws for their suppression. When the Donatists reproached him with making martyrs of their bishops and elders, and told him God would require an account of their blood at the day of judgment; he replied, ‘I know nothing of your martyrs, martyrs! martyrs to the devil. There are no martyrs out of the church, besides, it was their obstinacy, they killed themselves,’” (Orchard’s History, ppg 94,95). The Donatists believed it was the duty of the ministry to preach the gospel, and so call the children of God to obedience. They went meekly and humbly, but boldly and at the risk of their lives, preaching the gospel. “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (2 Timothy 2:25).

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling” (1 Corinthians 2:1-3).

Augustine did not believe that. He taught that it was the duty of the political powers to reinforce the preaching of the gospel in bringing people into the church. He invoked the power of the sword to force conversions.

21 Their Credibility Hinges on Augustine

Their Credibility Hinges on Augustine

We must keep in mind that just as the credibility of the Christian religion is rooted in the identity, and person, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the credibility of the Roman Catholic Church, and the various Protestant denominations that sprang from her, is just as dependent on the identity, and person, and work of this Saint Augustine of Hippo. This is the reason so much ink has been spilled in defending him, and making a saint of him. He was their founder, and their entire structure stands or falls with him. There had been a Judaizing, paganizing element plaguing the church since the time of the apostles. And all of that time they had resisted the saints and the truth of the gospel. The Academy had performed an enormous service in preparing the way. The Council of Nice had provided the organization. But it was left to Augustine, with his powerful intellect, his enormous ego, and his political abilities to organize the Catholic party into the powerful fighting force it became.

It was left to him to draw the battle lines. He was the man who chose infant baptism as a substitute for believer's baptism. He was the one who chose to do battle with the saints at the very point God required our first step of gospel obedience. The Catholic/Protestant community has no choice but to defend him, and make a saint of him. Their entire structure stands or falls with him.

Paul tells us, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works," 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. Does that passage describe Augustine? I will not presume to say. I have several volumes of his works in my library, and I must acknowledge that I have often been moved by reading his experience, as he tells of his struggles with his own carnality. The unregenerate do not war against their depravity. They appreciate it and cultivate it. They gain satisfaction from their own corruption. But then I read of his using his enormous influence to bring about the death of so many innocent people, whose only offense was in worshiping their Maker in ways he did not approve, and I cannot conceive of how any heaven born soul could engage in what was nothing more than calculated, cold-blooded murder-and that on a grand scale. It was judicial murder, but it was murder, nonetheless.

It is far too much that he drove them from their families, from their homes, and from their churches, but for him to have them killed is simply unexplainable. And, keep in mind that, more than any other person, Augustine was the instigator and enforcer of what he calls these penal laws.

Somebody tells us that Augustine was simply the product of his times; that it was the practice in that day to torture and kill those who refused to be converted. But that does not explain anything. More than anybody else, he was the man who started the practice. Had Augustine later expressed remorse over the people who died because of his campaigns, we might reach other conclusions. Even a secular court of law takes remorse into consideration. But the fact that Augustine seems

never to have regretted the many innocent people whose death he brought about, and the fact that, from all we can learn of him, he died, totally unrepentant over their deaths, we must forever withhold judgment. Our Calvinist historians have been faithful to relate the huge numbers of their own people who were killed during the Roman Catholic Inquisition. But they have been as silent as the tomb about literally thousands of innocent, God-fearing preachers who were torn from their homes, from their families, from their churches, and finally banished from the land-by this first and most illustrious Calvinist preacher- this founder of Calvinism. For over 400 years the Protestants have been grinding out their books, rewriting their history. They have kept us well informed about the suffering they experienced at the hands of the Roman Catholic authorities during what has come to be known as the Inquisition. What they have been very careful not to tell is that when the Calvinists were in authority, they were just as bloodthirsty as the Roman Catholic Inquisitors ever were.

22 Augustine and the Inquisition

Augustine and the Inquisition

Sylvester Hassell agrees that the blame for the Roman Catholic Inquisition belongs to Augustine. He says, "Augustine's theory of the right of a State to persecute its citizens to make them conform to a national religion involved the germs of absolute spiritual despotism, and of even the horrors of the Inquisition" (pg 407). The pattern laid down by Augustine in his campaign against the Donatists set the pattern for the Roman Catholic Church for more than a thousand years. Literally rivers of blood were shed by those who thought they had the right to persecute and kill those who would not submit to their authority. Augustine was long since dead when the Roman Catholic Inquisition was doing its torture and killing, but he was the man who laid the groundwork, and set the machinery in motion. The Inquisition was a court system set up by the Roman Catholic authorities to try those whom they deemed to be heretics. Those who refused to deny their faith were tortured and killed in the most diabolical ways. They were burned at the stake. They were put on the rack, and their bones were pulled out of joint. They were tied up in sacks with scorpions. They were scalded with boiling oil. Human ingenuity exhausted itself in devising new ways of torture. That persecution reached its height in the 1500's in what came to be called the Spanish Inquisition. Thomas Torquemada was at its head. Under his leadership there was a constant parade of innocent victims led to the stake and burned alive. Their only offence was in worshiping God in a manner not approved by the Roman Catholic authorities. He did his job so well that today, over four hundred years later, Spain is still virtually free of spiritual religion.

It has always been necessary to enforce infant baptism by the sword. Hassell says, "In order to enforce conformity to her religious creed and ceremonial, she has murdered fifty millions of human beings, with every imaginable device of diabolical cruelty-thus shedding enough martyr blood to fill a stream ten feet wide, ten feet deep, and twenty-five miles long."

Rome shed all that innocent blood in order to do two things: 1st, to prevent believer's baptism (they called it anabaptism, rebaptism, if the person had been baptized before by a Catholic priest), and 2nd, to enforce infant baptism.

It is questionable whether any religious practice by any people has ever had a bloodier history than infant baptism.

Infant baptism came to England almost 200 years later. It was introduced there as it was other places, by the sword. Orchard records, "Infant Baptism was not known to the Welsh Christians until A.D. 596 or 600, when Austin [Augustine of Canterbury] was sent by Gregory, Bishop of Rome, to convert the Saxons. In this he was successful, and according to Fox, he baptized ten thousand in the River Swale....But these Baptists utterly refused to practice the traditions of Rome for the commands of Christ, when this emissary of Rome threatened them in this wise, 'sins ye wol not receave peace of your brethren, ye shall of other receave warre and wretche.' The Saxons shortly after invaded Wales, it is thought through the influence of Austin, and slaughtered

incredible numbers.” (Orchard ppg xxii).

“The Church of Rome says Mr. W.E. H. Lecky, “has caused more wars, has shed more innocent blood, and inflicted more unmerited suffering, than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind.’ The history of the sixteenth century, with the decade preceding and following it, presents the most forcible illustrations of this horrible truth.”

“Among these illustrations are the cruel enslavement and extinction, by the Spanish and Portugese Catholics, of untold millions of the poor, inoffensive Indians of North, Central and South America; the inauguration, by the same Catholic nations, of the horrors of the African slave-trade; the Portugese persecution and enslavement of thousands of the NestorianSt. Thomas Christians in India; the pitiless impoverishment, enslavement or expulsion, with indescribable sufferings, of about a million Jews and a million Moors from Spain and Portugal; thirty-eight years of religious wars in France, and similar but shorter wars in Switzerland, Germany and Holland; three Catholic insurrections in England, and the sending forth of the Spanish Armada against the same Protestant country; the execution of about a thousand persons, on account of their religion, by the Anglo-Catholic Pope, King Henry VIII., and of about three hundred, on the same account, by his daughter, Bloody Queen Mary; the execution of from fifty to a hundred thousand Protestants in the Netherlands, and the condemnation of all the three million Netherlanders to death; the frightful massacres of the French Waldenses in Provence, and of the Italian Waldenses in Calabria, and of the Huguenots or French Protestants on the eve of St. Bartholomew (on account of which the pope sung a Te Deum and issued a medal); and the diabolical cruelties of the Spanish Inquisition, with its lurid Autos-da-fe, all over Southern Europe, effectually repressing, in those countries, all exhibitions of the spirit of religious freedom” (Hassell ppg 499,500). The Roman Catholic Inquisition was every bit as bloody as Lecky says it was, but he goes on to say what most historians are unwilling to say.

“The first Protestants,’ says Mr. Lecky, ‘were as undoubtedly intolerant as the Catholics.’ They derived the practice from the Catholics, and they persecuted the Catholics and other Protestants, and especially the Anabaptists. Persecution is directly opposed to the fundamental Protestant principle of the right of private judgment, and has, therefore, happily declined in almost all Protestant countries; but intolerance is the essence of Roman Catholicism, and, if armed with the power of the State, it would today wreak the same bloody and exterminating vengeance upon its opponents as it has practiced, when able, for fifteen hundred years. (Hassell pg 500).

23 The Reformers followed Augustine

The Reformers followed Augustine. In his Institutes Calvin quibbled with Augustine about any number of things, but on fundamental points they were perfectly agreed. If there is anyone who might imagine there is any real difference between the two, it is easy enough to settle the question. It will take some time—there is plenty to read—but the answer is readily available. His Institutes of the Christian Religion is still in print; it runs to 1200 pages. Augustine's works are also available. The Institutes are poorly indexed, but the works of Augustine are well indexed. Simply read Calvin's comments, then go to Augustine's index and look up Augustine's explanation. It becomes clear beyond all question that Calvin agreed with Augustine on almost every point.

What many seem to have overlooked are those other five points, five other doctrines, that were just as firmly imbedded in their writings as the T-U-L-I-P doctrine was. Augustine borrowed those doctrines from Judaism, and they were just as essential to the system as the T-U-L-I-P doctrine ever was.

They lost two of those points (church/state union and the power of the sword) when the United States adopted the First Amendment, granting freedom of religion, and Calvinism has never been the same. Prior to the American Revolution every colony had some form of established church. The First Amendment took that away. Without church/state union, and the power of the sword, to enforce their ideas, Calvinism has never been able to hold its own.

Augustine gave the Catholic Church the T-U-L-I-P doctrines, but not long after his death, without his powerful influence, those doctrines fell by the way. During his lifetime a British monk by the name of Pelagius denied most of what Augustine taught. He taught that man is not depraved; he does not need a revelation, the light of nature is enough; he does not need a redeemer; he can save himself, and so on.

Augustine was right in his opposition to Pelagius. But the fact he was on the right side in that battle does not excuse all else he did. So long as Augustine was around, he kept Pelagius at bay. But John Chrysostom also opposed his doctrine, and after Augustine died, John Cassian, a pupil of Chrysostom, taught a kind of Semi-Pelagianism. He is usually recognized as the founder of that system. He claimed that man is depraved, but not totally. That notion carried the day; it became the doctrine of the Catholic Church, and the T-U-L-I-P doctrine largely disappeared from Catholic thought. The T-U-L-I-P doctrine went into hibernation, but Augustine's other contribution, the C-A-C-I-P doctrine did not diminish in the least. It continued to be the guiding force behind the Roman Catholic Church all during the Dark Ages, and it was the real power in Protestantism until the First Amendment. The Bill of Rights did away with church/state union, and the power of the sword, and the religious world was forever changed.

If you would discover how closely John Calvin followed Augustine, you might wish to go through his Institutes, underscoring his various quotes. Underscore the name of the name of the source only. You will notice, first, that except for a few quotes from pagan philosophers, his quotes are

always from Roman Catholic authorities.

You will also discover that he quotes Augustine twice as often as he quotes all other authorities put together.

One thousand years after Augustine, John Calvin and the other Reformers would follow precisely in his footsteps. They copied more than his doctrine. They copied his bloodthirst for preachers who would not submit to their authority. The Waldensians and Anabaptists were the successors of the Novationists and Donatists. When Calvin wrote about Anabaptists, he called them heretics and blasphemers, dogs and filthy dogs, swine and filthy swine. He made no effort to conceal his bitter hatred for them, and to the limit of his ability he dealt with them the same way Augustine had dealt with the Donatists.

Those who think we criticize Calvin and the Reformers unnecessarily should put themselves in the place of the wife of some Anabaptist preacher, who stood by, watching helplessly as her husband was burned alive. She watched in horror as his skin blistered and burned, and his hair caught on fire. Imagine the feelings that must have gone through her as she wondered what would become of her and her little family. Imagine how bewildered she must have been, as she wondered how those Protestant preachers could gain such pleasure in delivering other preachers to be killed. Our Calvinist friends will continue to rewrite their own history. They will continue to cover up the cruelty of their founders. But history is too plain to be concealed. Anyone with the initiative to look at the record can learn the facts. The only difference between persecution by Catholics and persecution by Protestants was in the duration and the scope.

24 Multiple forces at work

Multiple forces at work The Protestant Reformation began with John Wycliffe in England in the 1300's and reached its climax 200 years later with Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Knox. During those 200 years there were multiple, almost numberless, forces at work. In the religious, political, and social upheaval of that period, every kind of force imaginable was pulling at the people. Some of those forces were central to the Reformation, and some of them had nothing to do with the Reformation-nor with the Christian religion. But, by their very existence, even those forces had an impact on all that went on.

There were some who had gone by a multitude of names, and had been scattered all over Europe and the Middle East ever since apostolic times. In earlier days they had been called Montanists, Donatists, and Novationists. Sometimes they had been called by such names as Bogomiles, or Philipopolitans, depending on where they were located. In Europe, at the time of the Reformation, they were more often called Waldensians, Albigenses, or Anabaptists.

They had Bibles, but they were scarce and expensive, and with Bibles in such short supply, it was inevitable they would entertain some error, both in doctrine and practice. The visible church has never been entirely free from error, not even in the apostolic age. That is why Paul wrote all those epistles. He was correcting errors in the churches of that day. But even though there were many things about which they were unsure, there were a few points on which the main body of the church never erred.

Like the Donatists in Augustine's day, they looked to Jesus Christ as their only Savior, and the Bible as their only authority. They defended a personal, spiritual religion, as opposed to any religion forced on them by the authorities. They believed in the resurrection of the dead, and judgment to come, and heaven and hell. And they would suffer themselves to be killed, rather than surrender their believers' baptism for infant baptism. Catholics and Protestants alike saw to it they got the opportunity to do just that.

God will always have a people who remain faithful to the truth of the Bible. Regardless of how they often erred on other points, on those simple points the true church has been the same in every day and age. And like the martyrs who suffered at the hands of Augustine, it was those principles that prompted them to suffer every kind of cruelty, every kind of painful death-at the hands of Catholics and Protestants alike-rather than deny their Maker. Those are the people through which our Primitive Baptists of this day trace our heritage.

There were men like John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, John Huss, and Balthasar Hubmaier. Those were men of noble character, and the purest of motives. They were determined to defend and promote true religion, and in their own spheres of influence they were very successful. Most of them paid with their lives. At the other extreme there were men like Thomas Munzer, who was either insane or unspeakably evil. He went, "in 1533, to Munster, in Westphalia, converted large numbers to his views, overturned the city government, and set up what he called the Kingdom of

New Zion, and intended to proceed to the conquest of the world” (Hassell pg 503). As many as 50 people a day were beheaded in the bloodletting that followed. Note: Munzer was the name of the man; Munster was the name of the town.

There were those, such as the German princes, and King Henry VIII of England, whose only interest was political. King Henry needed a male heir to continue his dynasty. His wife, Catherine of Aragon, had not been able to deliver that heir, and he was annoyed at the pope for refusing him permission to divorce her and marry Anne Boleyn. He wanted the pope out of his way, and out of English politics. In 1534, he broke with Rome, declared himself the head of the Church of England, and launched the Reformation in England. The German princes wanted the same thing. They wanted the Pope out of German politics. That was why they defended Martin Luther. He was their weapon against the Pope. With their help Luther overthrew the power of the Pope, and established the Lutheran Church as the state church in Germany. The princes protected him, and made him their puppet. If Luther thought he was the real power in Germany, he realized his mistake, when he was totally unable to restrain the princes in their atrocities against the peasants in the Peasants' War. When he discovered he could not restrain them, he urged them on. That same period was a time of greatly increased occult activity. In the dark of the night, occultists met in secluded places to perform their dark arts, their Black Sabbath, or Black Mass, to invoke Satan, and to engage in the most licentious, and immoral acts. The superstition of the age fueled that kind of conduct.

Occultists performing their disgraceful practices in the woods, in the dark of the night, had not the slightest connection with those Christians who were wrangling among themselves. They were not, in any way, connected with the Catholics, the Reformers, nor with the Anabaptists. And yet, it was the constant practice, both of the Catholics and the Reformers, to lump those who were neither Catholics, nor Protestants into one class, and call them all either Waldensians, or Anabaptists. If you were neither a Catholic, nor a Protestant, you must be a Waldensian, an Anabaptist. And you must share a common condemnation with all others-of whatever stripe-who would not submit to one or the other authority.

More than that, both Catholics and Protestants lumped those humble Waldensians and Anabaptists together with occult-ists engaged in every kind of witchcraft and immorality, and called them all Anabaptists. That is the reason the Protestants are able to come up with so many documents indicating the Anabaptists and Waldensians were often unsound in the faith. They called anybody with whom they disagreed an Anabaptist. Pedobaptists are still doing that. They know better, but they cannot come up with any better way to slander those who remained faithful to the Bible and to their Lord.

Many of those whom present day Pedobaptists call Anabaptists could hardly be thought of as any kind of Christians. And if some of them were not actually insane, they had, at least, been driven to madness by the brutal treatment they had received from those in power.

One instance of this misnaming of people is the insistence by Protestants that the Thomas Munzer we mentioned a moment ago was an Anabaptist. Munzer had never been an Anabaptist, but in the turmoil of the time, and considering how many Anabaptists there were in Germany at the time, and considering how oppressed they had been, it was inevitable that some few Anabaptists would be caught up in the movement.

Munzer was himself a Lutheran. At least, Lutheran infant baptism was the only baptism he ever received. But Luther, and the Lutheran ministry repudiated his work as vigorously as the Anabaptists did.

It would be as unfair to charge the Lutherans with his conduct as it is to charge the Anabaptists. And yet, from that day until this, Protestants have consistently loaded him on the Anabaptists. Many of them even pretend the Baptists, as a people, had their origin with Munzer and the tragedy at Munster, in Westphalia.

They know better, but they cannot find any instance in history, when the Baptists, by whatever name, have waged armed war against those they could not convert. Catholics and Protestants did that; the Baptists never have. And because they cannot cite any valid instance, they have pressed the Munster Rebellion into service.

Anabaptist means re-baptizer. The Anabaptists, and others of the same opinion, had always denied they were actually Anabaptists; they did not re-baptize anybody. They insisted they only baptized them; the first ritual was not really baptism. But it was this calling anybody and everybody an Anabaptist that made Baptists ashamed of the name. The practice became so much a part of the language, the Baptists began to vigorously reject the name. If you spend any time at all studying the documents of that time, especially Baptist documents from the 1600's, you will find them repeatedly denying they were Anabaptists.

They were rejecting the tag their adversaries had hung on them; they were not denying they were the descendants of those faithful Anabaptists, Waldensians, Albigenses, etc. who had kept the faith all during the dark days of oppression. In addition to all the others, there were the leading Reformers, men like Martin Luther and John Calvin. An attitude of fairness requires that we give these Reformers the benefit of the doubt. It appears fairly certain that at the beginning of their ministries many of them were honest and sincere. They were appalled at the corruption and immorality that had swallowed up the Catholic religion, and they were looking for something better.

25 The Protestant Reformers

The Protestant Reformers The Protestant Reformation was the watershed event in the history of the Western World. It broke the back of the Roman Catholic Church, and limited the power of the Pope. It marked the end of the Dark Ages and ushered in the modern world. No other event in history so dominates the history of Western Civilization.

Men like Martin Luther and John Calvin were outraged at the rampant corruption in the Catholic Church. The priests were, for the most part, immoral, and virtually illiterate. Very few of them could deliver a sermon. They had turned the nunneries into brothels for their own benefit. Religion had become a mockery. The final straw came when, in order to raise money to build St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, the Pope sent John Tetzel and his assistants all over Europe selling Indulgences. They were described as if they were licenses to sin. They were marketed that way, and the people saw them in that light. People paid their money, and conducted their lives accordingly. At the very risk of their lives, the Reformers stood boldly against such corruption, and Rome trembled. They saw untold multitudes of their own people tortured, crippled, and burned at the stake. But those brave Reformers bearded the lion in his den, and the world has never been quite the same.

They were sincerely looking for a purer and more scriptural form of worship. They stood boldly against the Pope and the Roman Catholic hierarchy, and they suffered for it. In their earlier ministries they stand out as heroic examples, and that testimony rings out over the ages. We cannot read of their heroism without being moved and encouraged. Till the end of time their heroism will stand as a monument to their courage. But it is just as clear, that after an initial bold stand for the truth, almost to a man, the Reformers soon apostatized from their earlier zeal for truth.

They saw what the consequence would be, if they consistently followed their initial course. They would suffer as the Anabaptists were suffering. They counted the cost, and in their later ministry, they denied virtually all they had once advocated. The Waldensians and Anabaptists were what the Reformers claimed to be, and the Reformers hated them for it. They opposed, and persecuted, those humble, God-fearing Waldensians and Anabaptists just as viciously as the Catholics ever did. Their earlier devotion to truth soon disappeared, and it was that spirit of persecution the Reformers handed down to the ages. The Lord said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back is fit for the kingdom is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). There have never been any more fierce enemies to the truth than those who have once known the truth and departed from it. But we must take time to say in their defense, the Reformers never at any time intended to abandon the Catholic religion. They intended to live and die as good Catholics. They just did not intend to be Roman Catholics. They would not be subject to the Pope of Rome. Calvin and the other Reformers hoped to bring about a reformation, to produce a new form, of the Catholic religion. That is why it is called the Protestant Reformation (literally the re-form-ation). Calvin wanted to restore the Catholic religion to what it had been in the time of Augustine. In that

he was totally successful. The Presbyterian Church of Calvin's day was precisely what the Catholic Church had been in Augustine's day.

More than that, the Reformers all believed in the power of the sword in spreading their religion. They all believed in a state religion established by law. Luther was an Augustinian monk. Augustine of Hippo was their guiding light, and they had learned their lessons well.

They opposed the Waldensians and Anabaptists just as bitterly, and just as viciously, as Augustine had opposed the Donatists and Novationists in his day. With that in mind, we must acknowledge that they did not so much apostatize from their earlier intentions, as they were originally misunderstood. It was their intention all along to replace Roman Catholicism with their various brands of Protestant Catholicism. In that they were entirely successful.

26 The Rise of Martin Luther

The Rise of Martin Luther The career of Martin Luther began very well. Sylvester Hassell could not seem to find words sufficient to describe him. He describes Luther as, “the greatest of all Germans, and one of the grandest characters of all time, the founder of the German language and of modern public schools, the typical hero of the German race, the author of the best German hymns, and the translator of the best German Bible.” (Hassell pg 474,475)

Luther the Augustinian: “Vividly realizing the vanity of the world, he resolved to forsake it, and at that time knowing no better way of doing so, he entered the Augustinian convent at Erfurt, July 17th, 1505. This was the best Roman Catholic Order, and traced its origin to Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, in North Africa, in the fifth century. Here Luther subjected himself to the severest monastic discipline, and the humble services of sweeper, porter and beggar. His deep mental conflicts, penances and mortifications of the flesh seriously undermined his health and brought him to the brink of despair. He found a whole Bible and read it diligently, but it did not bring him peace. Deeply burdened with sin, and not satisfied with his infant baptism or any other Roman Catholic form, he invented continually new forms of penance; but ‘all the while head and heart told him that outward acts could never banish sin’”

“‘I tormented myself to death,’ he said, ‘to make my peace with God, but I was in darkness and found it not.’ He became a full monk in 1506; and his prayers, and vigils, and fasts, and castigations were so excessive that he says that all his fellow-monks will bear him witness that, if ever a monk entered Heaven through monkery, he also could thus have entered. He revered the Fathers, and adored the pope, and sought zealously and heartily to obey their teachings; but no comfort came to his sin-sick soul” (Hassell pg 475)

“In 1507 he was ordained a priest; and in 1508 he was appointed Professor of Philosophy in Wittenberg University. In 1509 he was made a Bachelor of Theology, and in 1512 a Doctor of Theology. In 1510 he visited Rome on business for the Augustinian Order; and there he saw something of the depth of the mystery of Roman Catholic iniquity, so that he afterwards said he would not take a hundred thousand florins instead of having seen Rome.”

“While devoutly, on his knees, creeping up the Scala Sancta, or holy stairway, he seemed to hear an inward voice crying to him, ‘The just shall live by faith’ (Romans 1:17)... Here I felt at once,’ he says, ‘that I was wholly born again, and that I had entered through open doors into paradise itself. That passage of Paul was truly to me the gate of paradise’” (Hassell pg 476).

Tetzel’s sale of Indulgences-licenses to sin: “And when the monster Tetzel - fit tool for such a Satanic business - came in four miles of Wittenberg, and, to make money for himself and the pope, hawked, with brazen impudence, the papal indulgences for sin, and when Luther learned in the confessional at Wittenberg that many of his townspeople had bought these indulgences, and considered them a sufficient covering and atonement for the grossest sins, the spirit of the God-taught professor, like Paul’s at Athens, was deeply stirred within him, and he resolved to

denounce the horrible abomination. Without consulting any man, and without considering the tremendous consequences, he prepared, and at noonday, Oct. 31st, 1517, he nailed to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, ninety-five Theses or Propositions denouncing indulgences.”

“The next day was the Festival of All-Saints at Wittenberg. Large numbers of people flocked to the city from all quarters, and were intensely excited by Luther’s Theses, and many rejoiced, some from political and some from religious motives, that some one had been found bold enough at last to bell the great papal cat. Instead of taking back home with them indulgences for sin, they carried Luther’s Theses; the newly invented printing presses rapidly reproduced them; and in two weeks Germany, and in four weeks Christendom, was ablaze. The Protestant Reformation was begun” (Hassell ppg 476,477).

Luther declares war against the Pope: “Luther for several years discovered and denounced more and more of the imposture, corruption and unscripturalness of Roman Catholicism. The pope at first affected to treat him with contempt; but, finding that the truth was everywhere gaining ground, and his dominion threatened....Leo X., feeling that he could endure this dangerous opposition no longer, in 1520 excommunicated Luther; and the latter, a few months afterwards, boldly burned the papal bull, together with the Catholic Canon Law and False Decretals, and thus declared open war with the Roman Antichrist.”

“Summoned by Charles V., the Catholic King of Spain and Emperor of Germany, the most powerful monarch of his time, to appear before him at the Diet of Worms in 1521, Luther, to his friends who warned him that he would be burned there as Hus had been burned at Constance, replied: ‘Though they should kindle a fire as high as Heaven between Wittenberg and Worms, yet I will go and appear in the name of the Lord; yea, I will confess Christ in the very mouth of Behemoth.’”

“And, as he was nearing Worms, he said to a friend who warned him of his danger: ‘To Worms was I called, and to Worms must I go; and, were there as many devils there as tiles upon the roofs, yet would I enter into that city.’ Before the splendid and imposing assembly, composed of the emperor and more than two hundred princes and nobles, Bishops and archbishops, and five thousand people, April 18th, 1521, Luther calmly and boldly declared that unless his views were proved erroneous by some other authority than by pope or by Council, even by clear testimonies of Scripture or plain arguments, he could not and would not retract anything that he had written; that his conscience would not permit him to recant; and he concluded his remarks with these undaunted words: ‘Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise; God help me. Amen.’” (Hassell ppg 477,478)

“He was allowed by the emperor to leave Worms on a safe-conduct that gave him twenty-one days in which to return to Wittenberg; and May 8th, the emperor issued an edict placing him under the ban of the empire, declaring him an outlaw, and forbidding all people to give him food or fire or shelter” (Hassell pg 478).

Luther protected by Frederick: “Luther was protected by the national feeling of Germany from attack; but Frederic, the Elector of Saxony, fearing that the most able and famous of the professors in his new University of Wittenberg might fall a victim to the emperor’s ban, had him stopped, on his return from Worms, at Eisenach, by a band of armed masked knights, and carried to the fortified castle of the Wartburg. Here he remained incognito ten months, and devoted

his time to the best German translation of the New Testament that has ever been made - by far the most important work that he was ever enabled to perform for the German people, and the instrument which, under Providence, contributed most to the permanence of the Reformation. His translation of the New Testament, almost entirely his own unaided work, was published in 1522; and his translation of the Old Testament, in which he was assisted by Melancthon, Bugenhagen and Cruciger, was published in 1534" (Hassell pg 479)

Luther at the very doorway of the church: "During the first and most glorious period of Luther's Christian life, ending about 1522, when, as Prof. T.M. Lindsay remarks in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, he was 'raised above himself,' he came to be virtually almost a Bible Baptist. In his tract on the Sacrament of Baptism, published in 1519, he distinguishes carefully between the sign and the thing signified- the ordinance of baptism being the mere outward sign of the far more important spiritual reality within, the death to sin, the new birth, and a new life in Christ. He considered that there was no eternally saving virtue either in the literal water of baptism or in the literal bread and wine of the Lord's Supper; but that the true virtue lay in the living, spiritual, justifying faith within."

Luther's first departure: "From this simple scriptural view of the ordinances he made the first departure in his 'Babylonian Captivity of the Church' published in 1520, wherein he adopted a view similar to Calvin's -that the ordinances are seals or pledges of the inward grace." His second departure: "But, after he came in contact with the Anabaptists, he made a still further departure from the symbolical view of the ordinances, because he thought that neither his first nor his second views would justify infant baptism." His third departure: "And, in his Sermon on Baptism, in 1535, his natural conservatism went far backwards towards his old Roman Catholic standpoint, medieval sacramental-ism, substituting the outward ordinances for the efficacious atonement of Christ and the inward grace of justifying faith."

"From his favorite Apostle, in his favorite epistle, which has been called 'the Magna Charta of Evangelical Protestantism,' Luther ought to have learned not to imitate the foolish judaizing Galatians, who, 'having begun in the Spirit,' thought to be 'made perfect by the flesh' (Galatians 3:3)" (Hassell pg 479) The peasants' war: "The Peasants' War in Germany, in 1524 and 1525, has been well described as the 'terrible scream of oppressed humanity.' Their oppressions had gradually increased in severity as the nobles became more extravagant, and the clergy more sensual. The example of free Switzerland encouraged the hope of success, and from 1476 to 1517 there were risings here and there among the peasants of the south of Germany."

"The Reformation, by diffusing sentiments favorable to liberty, was not indeed the cause, but the occasion of the great insurrection of 1525; although Luther, Melancthon, and the other leading reformers, while urging the nobles to justice and humanity, strongly reprobated the ultimate violent proceedings of the peasants." The peasants' simple requests: "The Twelve Articles expressing the demands of the peasants are now almost universally commended for their moderation. They asked the right to choose their own pastors; agreed to pay, not small tithes, but tithes of corn for the support of the pastors and the poor; they asked for freedom from serfdom; that wild game and fish should be free to all; that woods and forests, not yet purchased by the nobles, should be free to all for fuel; that the peasants should not render more services than had been required of their forefathers; that for additional services wages should be paid; that rent, when above the value of

the land, should be properly valued and lowered; that definite punishments for crimes should be fixed; that common unpurchased land should be given up to common use; that death-gifts (that is, the right of the lord to take the best chattel of the deceased tenant) should be done away with; and the peasants, in conclusion, declared that any of these articles proved to be contrary to the Scriptures should be null and void.”

“Warned by the terrible French Revolution at the close of the eighteenth century, Germany granted the most of these rights to her peasants early in the nineteenth century. But the German Princes of the sixteenth century were in no mood to grant them. Luther’s exhortations to them had no effect in abating what he called their tyranny and insanity; nor did he succeed in inducing the peasants to cease their mad rebellion.”

Luther’s lack of courage: “‘Had he thrown the weight of his influence into the peasants’ scales,’ says Prof. Lindsay, ‘and brought the middle classes, who would certainly have followed him, to the side of the peasants, a peaceful solution would in all probability have been arrived at, and the horrors of massacre averted. But Luther, bold enough against the pope or the emperor, never had courage to withstand that authority to which he was constantly accustomed, the German Princes.’”

“He trusted too much in fine language. His advice for the choice of arbiters came ten months too late. The bloody struggle came; the stream of rebellion and destruction rolled on to Thuringia and Saxony, and Luther apparently lost his head, and actually encouraged the nobles in their sanguinary suppression of the revolt, in his pamphlet entitled ‘Against the Murdering, Robbing, Rats of Peasants,’ where he hounds on the authorities to ‘stab, kill and strangle!’ The Princes leagued together, and routed the peasants everywhere, and butchered 50,000 of them; 100,000 perished during the war; and the survivors were subjected to greater oppression than ever” (Hassell pg 480,481)

Luther’s hatred for the Baptists, and his final apostasy: “While Martin Luther had great spiritual light on the doctrine of grace, the crime of religious persecution, and other matters, he was in great spiritual darkness on many other subjects. Among the latter, I will name the most important, as follows: His urging the Princes to war on the Peasants; his increasing hatred, during the last twenty years of his life, of the Anabaptists and of all others who differed from him; his traditionalism; his sacramentalism; his assumption of infallibility, making himself a pope, considering himself the authoritative judge both of the meaning and the authenticity of Scripture; his thus rejecting the books of Esther, Jonah, James and Revelation, and his criticism of the books of Chronicles, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Hebrews and Jude; and his advising Henry VIII. of England to marry a second wife without getting a divorce from his first, and his authorizing, or granting a dispensation to Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, the princely champion of the Reformation, to do the same thing, which, to the great scandal of morals and of the cause he espoused, the latter did, thus having two wives at once, and a large family by each. This pope-imitating dispensation was drawn up and signed by Luther and Melancthon at Wittenberg, December 19th, 1539, and afterwards signed by seven other Protestant ministers; the prudent attempt to keep it secret failed” (Hassell pg 486).

27 The Reformers knew better

The Reformers knew better

Luther, Calvin, and the various Reformers seem to have started so well, how could they so soon turn back. How could they go from such clear understanding of so many Bible truths to denying truths so simple even a child could understand them.

If I might repeat myself, we need to realize that the Reformers never intended to forsake the Catholic religion; they intended to live and die as good Catholics. They certainly had no intention of joining those despised Anabaptists. They would follow the truth wherever it led them, that is, unless it led them to the Anabaptists. That was the last place they intended to go. As much as they despised the Pope, they did not hate him nearly so much as they hated the Anabaptists.

Those humble, God-fearing saints, worshiping God in their little secluded meeting houses, had what the Reformers claimed to have, and the Reformers hated them for it. As determined as the Reformers were to preach the truth, they did not love the truth enough to follow it to the Lord's church. Before they would do that, they would preach doctrines they knew to be false. If falsehood was required to promote their agenda, they would preach falsehood. It would take a person naive in the extreme to imagine the Reformers believed some of the things they preached in opposition to the Anabaptists.

They knew their doctrine on baptism was false. First off, the record is clear that Luther and Calvin knew the truth about believer's baptism by immersion. But they refused to preach it. Space will only allow a very few illustrations.

"Vicecomes, a learned Papist, has left upon record, that Luther, Calvin, and Beza, were adversaries of Infant-baptism; though the Pedobaptists look upon this only as a slander cast upon them. 'Tis certain that Zwingli, that holy and learned reformer, who flourished about the year 1520, was for some time against it, as he ingenuously confesses in these words...., Wherefore I myself, that I may ingenuously confess the truth, some years ago, being deceived with this error, thought it better that children's baptism should be delayed till they came to full age; though, (adds he) I never broke forth into that immodesty and importunity, as some now do" (Crosby, Preface to vol. 1, ppg. xx, xxi).

"Luther has, in several places, fully declared his opinion in this matter: 'Baptism, saith he, is a Greek word; it may be termed a dipping, when we dip something in water, that it may be wholly covered with water: And although that custom be now altogether abolished among the most part, for neither do they dip the whole children, but only sprinkle them with a little water, they ought altogether nevertheless to be dipped, and presently drawn out again; for the etymology of the word seems to require that....I would have those that are to be baptized, to be altogether dipped into the water, as the word doth sound, and the mystery doth signify" (Crosby, Preface to vol. 1, pg. xxi).

“At length they did agree among themselves, that the judgment of Luther, and of the divines of Wittenburg, should be demanded about this point: Which being done, Luther, did write back to Hamburg, that this sprinkling was an abuse, which they ought to remove. Thus plunging was restored at Hamburg” (Crosby, Preface to vol. 1, pg xxiii).

Calvin and the various Reformers had much to say about the Bible as the one and only authority in matters of religion, and yet they allowed themselves the liberty to alter, modify, and invent such practices as they thought necessary. They knew the Bible too well to believe God allowed for any change or modification of what he had commanded. And yet that is exactly what they did.

Calvin did not even claim scriptural authority for his form of church government: Calvin’s form of church government at Geneva was neither scriptural nor, in any sense, Christian. He did not have and did not claim scriptural authority for that form of church government.

“The Presbyterian polity, or church government, is imaginarily derived, primarily from the old Jewish Sanhedrims, and secondarily from the Greek, Roman and Anglo-Saxon Senates; but the best authorities declare that the gradation of Session, Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly was an invention of Calvin himself (his doctrine of the organization of the church and of its relation to the State being the only original feature of his system, says J.R. Green); and the civil government already existing in Geneva and other cities (consisting of four Councils, rising in power one above the other) seems to have suggested the idea to him. In Geneva were the Little Council (or Council of 25), the Council of 60, the Council of 200, and the General Council or General Assembly of Citizens.”

“As for the two permanent Jewish courts called the Lesser and the Greater Sanhedrim, the first of inferior and the second of appellate jurisdiction, they are nowhere mentioned in the Old Testament, but are believed by the most critical scholars to have been derived by the Jews from the Macedonians (or Greeks) about 300 B.C. - the very name, Sanhedrim, being, not a Hebrew, but a Greek word” (Hassell ppg 491,492).

Calvin could not have possibly believed his unscriptural form of government gave him authority to treat the citizens of Geneva the way he did. Having so totally, and so unashamedly, abandoned the Bible as the guide for the government of the church, Calvin and his consistory engaged in the most vicious, and unscriptural, tyranny over the citizens of Geneva.

“Calvin’s Consistory (or Presbytery), composed of six preachers and twelve laymen, of which body he was President, exercised a most stringent, vigilant, inquisitorial supervision, in respect to doctrine, morals and manners, over the entire life of every inhabitant of Geneva; not only excommunicating persons of every age and sex, but handing them over to the civil authorities to be imprisoned, tortured or put to death for heresies, improprieties and immoralities.”

“The proceedings of the Consistory were marked by a Dionysian and Draconian severity. ‘The prisons became filled, and the executioner was kept busy. A child was beheaded for striking its father and mother. Another child, sixteen years old, for attempting to strike its mother, was sentenced to death, but, on account of its youth, the sentence was commuted; and having been publicly whipped, with a cord about its neck, it was banished from the city. A woman was chastised with rods for singing secular songs to the melody of the Psalms. A man was imprisoned and banished for reading the writings of the Italian humanist, Poggio. Profanity and drunkenness were

severely punished; dancing, and the manufacture or use of cards, or nine-pins, and even looking upon a dance, and giving children the names of Catholic saints, and extravagance or eccentricity of dress, and the dissemination of divergent theological doctrines, brought down upon the delinquent the vengeance of the laws” (Hassell pg 492). To banish a child to the wilderness was tantamount to a death sentence. In those days of such grinding poverty it was difficult for established families to survive. A sixteen year old child turned out into the wilderness without food or shelter, or any way to secure a livelihood, had little or no chance to survive. It is true these sentences were handed down by the Consistory; but Calvin was himself the President. It is hard to imagine they could have done it without his hearty approval. Can you imagine the feelings of those parents, who saw their teenage son banished to what was likely his death by starvation? Can you imagine the feelings of the parents of the child whose head was chopped off at the instruction of Calvin’s Consistory?

It is certainly proper to punish a child who strikes his parents, but there is no way to justify chopping the child’s head off. And it is impossible to justify John Calvin for handing down any such sentence. (He was the head of the consistory, whose job it was to regulate such cases).

It would be easy to conclude that John Calvin was an unspeakably wicked, and annoyingly self-righteous person, who enjoyed seeing children’s heads chopped off, and having teenagers beaten with a whip and turned out into the wilderness to starve. I am not willing to make any such judgment. I am not his judge; I will leave that to his Maker. But I confess that I am totally at a loss to understand how any preacher of the gospel could advocate such things.

I am not willing to express an opinion as to whether John Calvin was, or was not, a regenerate person. God only knows. But I have no problem with concluding that anybody who imagines there is Bible authority for his conduct is not an especially bright person.

“Christ and His Apostles did not persecute; neither does the true church of Christ. The Protestant persecutions of each other, and of Catholics, and of Anabaptists, were derived from Rome, and were in direct and horrid contradiction of the Protestant principle of freedom of conscience. Calvin’s condemnation and execution of the almost Anabaptist and the Anti-Trinitarian, Michael Servetus (1553), though then approved by his brother Protestants, is a sad and inefface-able blot upon his character - the bloody deed producing only evil, utterly condemned by the entire spirit of the New Testament, and by every person (not a Roman Catholic) of today” (Hassell pg 492).

28 The Burning of Servetus

The Burning of Servetus

There is no event that so clearly demonstrates the hatred of the Reformers for the Anabaptists as the burning of Michael Servetus does. Nothing so embarrasses the devotees of John Calvin, and there is no event they have worked so hard at explaining away. But facts are stubborn things. They sometimes refuse to be quiet. The mock trial and burning of Servetus has been an embarrassment to Calvin's admirers for over four hundred years, and their historians have done all within their power to prove Calvin had the right to have him killed. If they cannot prove it was right to kill him, they would at least prove that his treatment was an aberration, and not the customary practice. The Reformers never had as much opportunity, and for as long a time, as the Catholics did, but to the limit of their ability they were just as brutal as the Catholic Inquisitors ever were. The story of Servetus sheds valuable light on the attitude and the conduct of the Reformers toward those who differed with them. The defenders of John Calvin do all they can to explain away the execution of Michael Servetus, and we should expect they would. But to those not so slavishly committed to the memory of Calvin the matter seems very clear.

Calvin had a long-standing grudge against Servetus, and for 20 years he watched for the opportunity to get his revenge.

Servetus was clearly an intellectual giant. He was already a well known scholar in European intellectual circles when he first met Calvin, and Calvin was jealous. At that time Calvin had not yet made his mark. To give just one example of Servetus' work, James Harvey gets the credit for the discovery of the circulation of blood, but Servetus wrote about the subject 25 years before Harvey was born.

Servetus was obviously a man with a towering intellect, and an ego to match. He had profound discussions with Oeco-lampadius, Bucer, and Capito, and other leaders of the Reformation, before he met Calvin. As soon as they did meet, they had an instant dislike for each other. Calvin did not like the attitude of Servetus and he challenged him to a debate. But Servetus acted as if Calvin was a nobody, and defeating him was not worth the effort. Calvin carried a grudge against Servetus from that time until he finally had him arrested and burnt in Geneva, Switzerland.

Robert Robinson (Robinson's Researches, 1792) provides a very good account of their relationship, and most of our comments about Calvin and Servetus will be excerpts from that book. (Rather than insert a long series of page references, suffice it to say that all the quotes from Robinson are found from pages 327 to 342 of that book).

Servetus opposed the doctrine of the Trinity, and he wrote several books on the subject. But it should be safe to say that nothing he wrote gave Calvin the right to trap him like a animal, and have him roasted alive.

Robinson tells us, "While the inquisitorial courts were making havoc with Moors, Jews, and heretics in Spain, there appeared, in the year fifteen hundred and thirty, a young gentleman of about nineteen or twenty years of age....named Michael Servete....He was himself an original genius, of a manly spirit, bold in his inquiries after truth, and generous as the day in communicating his opinions, not doubting that he had as much right to investigate the doctrine of the Trinity as others had that of transubstantiation."

"He was a student in his earliest youth and understood Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; and in some degree philosophy and mathematics before he was fifteen. He was only eighteen when he published his first book against the Trinity."

"It was said just now, that Servetus was in part a stranger to the spirit of the Reformers. He had indeed experienced a little of it in Oecolampadius and Bucer, who had discovered much indignation at the presumption of the young man for daring to call in question doctrines....not only held and taught, but taught as truths so indisputable, that it was even a crime to suspect whether they were true."

"Bucer declared from the pulpit, that Servetus 'deserved to be cut in pieces, and his bowels torn out of him.' Little doth a young generous mind, like that of Severtus, know to what a degree of settled hatred and savage zeal old habits of speculation rise in the hearts of some orthodox divines."

Bucer was one of the Reformers Servetus had debated privately. This statement by Bucer-from the pulpit- demonstrates something about the preaching and the attitudes of the Calvinistic Reformers.

Bucer raged from the pulpit that he wanted Servetus mutilated and disemboweled. To say the least, that is not the kind of language you expect from a follower of the Savior of sinners-and certainly not from the pulpit. Our Calvinist friends have done a good job of covering their tracks. Otherwise such quotes would be emblazoned across the pages of history.

Robinson goes on to talk about the political maneuvering of these Protestant preachers, "endeavoring to enlist princes" to assist them in their efforts (in the words of Bucer) to see to it that Servetus is "cut in pieces, and his bowels torn from him."

Robinson goes on, "Beside, they were endeavoring to enlist princes under their standards of faith, and they entertained hopes of winning the emperor over to their party; while Servetus, young, vigorous, and wholly unconnected, aimed at nothing but truth, and pushed his inquiries without keeping or pretending to keep measures with any party. In this spirit he quitted Germany, and went to the University of Paris. There he studied mathematics and physick [medi-cine], and was admitted master of arts and doctor of medicine. Here he became acquainted with Calvin, who was then at Paris, and who, as Servetus made no secret of his religious principles, opposed his notions, and appointed a time to hold a conference with him, which for some reason Servetus declined....It is clear from many anecdotes, which afterwards transpired, he had no great opinion, either of the genius or religion of Calvin. They were much of an age, and it is not improbable, that Servetus, who was a high spirited man, declined a contest, in which he thought a victory would not do him much honor."

“Servetus had examined the works of Calvin very carefully, and not finding they deserved the great reputation, which they had acquired among the reformed, he consulted him not so much to be instructed by him as to perplex him....Servetus disputed every word, and pushed hard, and....[Calvin]...felt his oracular dignity hurt, and taxed him with pride.” In retrospect, we realize that Servetus had much to do with bringing about his own death. He was a man of unquestioned genius. Considering all he accomplished and at such a young age, it is likely that had he lived, and his work been preserved, he would have been ranked with the greatest intellects of the age. At the moment, he was entertaining himself by challenging and pestering another great intellect. He was young and naive, and he, obviously, had no idea how dangerous it was to challenge a man with such powerful political connections and such bloody motives as John Calvin. He was having fun annoying the great Calvin. He must not have realized that every letter he wrote only stirred up a spiteful preacher who wanted nothing more than to have him killed-and who had the connections to get it done.

Servetus was not in Geneva, and it did not appear likely he was ever going to be. So Calvin began a letter writing campaign enlisting his friends, both Catholics and Protestants, to help catch him. Servetus continued to entertain himself by writing Calvin, and pointing out mistakes in his writings.

Robinson goes on, “Of all Calvin’s works his favorite production was the book entitled Christian Institutes. Servetus read this book, as a critic should do, with his reasoning powers in free exercise, and finding in it a great number of mistakes and errors, he took the liberty to inform the author of them. This so irritated Calvin that he never forgave him, and instead of profiting by the advice of the critic, he wrote letters to his friends Viret and Farel, ‘that if ever this heretic should fall into his hands, he would order it so, that it should cost him his life.’”

“In the year [fifteen] fifty-three Servetus printed at Vienne his chief work, entitled Christianismi Restitutio.....It was printed without the name of the author, or of the city, or of the printer.....By the way, it is in the fifth book of the first part of this work, that the famous passage concerning the circulation of the blood is found. Servetus was the first physician who mentioned it.”

“Calvin, who had proselytes and spies everywhere, had an admirer at Geneva, one William Trie, a native of Lyon.... Trie communicated Arney’s letters to Calvin, who dictated answers to them, so that they are, as Mr. D’Artigny, who published them from originals, calls them, Calvin’s letters under the name of William Trie.” In these letters Calvin sent the Catholic authorities evidence against Servetus and pestered them as to why they did not burn Servetus. Robinson records him as writing, “‘You cruelly burn us....Where, pray, is the zeal you pretend to? And where is the wisdom of this fine hierarchy you magnify so much?’”

“This letter occasioned a prosecution against Servetus. Arney carried the letter with the sheet to Ory the inquisitor. Ory, finding there was not sufficient matter to cause an arrest, dictated a letter to Arney addressed to Trie, entreating him, to send the whole work entire. ‘Calvin, says Mr. D’Artigny, ‘charmed with finding that every thing succeeded according to his desire, composed an answer in the name of his confidant, and sent other papers, which were more than sufficient to convict Servetus.’”

“The two letters characterize this pretended reformer to perfection, who with an external show of great moderation, and an ardent zeal for religion, meditated nothing else but revenge for personal

injuries.” On the fourth of April he was arrested and put in prison awaiting trial, but he escaped. “Four months the doctor concealed himself, nobody knows where. Having determined to go to Naples, and settle there in the practice of his profession, he took his way through Geneva, but kept close for fear of a discovery. While he waited for a boat to cross the lake in his way to Zurich, by some means Calvin got intelligence of his arrival; and although it was on a Sunday, yet he prevailed upon the chief syndick to arrest and imprison him.”

“As it was necessary for some person to prosecute Servetus, Calvin employed one of his own family, a Nicholas de la Fontaine....Calvin did not blush to say, ‘I ordered it so that a party should be found to accuse him, not denying that the action was drawn up by my advice.’ What a glorious reformation had been wrought at Geneva, when the proof of a man’s Christianity lay in his humbly requesting the magistrates to burn a foreign gentleman, over whom they had no jurisdiction, for the honor of God and his eminent servant Mr. Calvin.”

“The doctor was arrested and imprisoned on Sunday the thirteenth of August. That very day he was brought into court, and short as the notice had been, La Fontaine was ready prepared, and accused him of the capital crime of heresy, in proof of which he produced a copy of the doctor’s Ptolemy, a Latin Bible with his marginal notes, and a manuscript, which had never been printed, and which six years ago he had sent to Calvin to know what he thought of it. Calvin therefore furnished La Fontaine with evidence, such as it was, against the prisoner, and he expressly affirms, ‘La Fontaine demanded justice against him by my advice.’ Those are his own words.”

“On a future day, Calvin appeared in court, and disputed with him on the wordspersonandhypostasis; and yet he knew if he succeeded in convicting the prisoner of heresy, the crime was capital, and he was doomed by the law to die.”

“On the twenty-second the doctor [Servetus] presented a petition to the syndicks and council, which consists of three articles. First he petitions to be discharged from the criminal accusation of a capital offence, because the apostles, and the primitive church had no notion of making a criminal process of any doctrine of the scripture, or any questions arising from it.”

“Secondly, he prays to be discharged, because he had not committed any civil offence, either in their territories or anywhere else; because he had never been seditious or turbulent: because the questions before the court were difficult, and ought to be left to learned men: and because he had never spoke of them even in Germany to any more than three, Oecolampadius, Bucer, and Capito. He ought not to be punished, he said, for proposing questions to divines without any sedition.”

“Lastly, he humbly requests, as he was a foreigner, and wholly unacquainted with the laws and customs of the republic, that they would grant him counsel to speak for him. The petition was rejected....What chance had this poor gentleman for his life?”

“In this deplorable situation, far from his own country; fallen into the hands of cruel strangers, all under the influence of Calvin his avowed enemy, who bore him a mortal hatred; stripped of all his property; [he was] confined in a damp prison, and neglected till he was almost eaten up with vermin, denied an advocate, and loaded with every indignity that barbarity could invent.”

“The pretense of heresy was a mere farce. Calvin did but half believe the Trinity himself....Omitting a great number of maneuvers of injustice and cruelty, the last act of this tragedy was performed at Geneva on the twenty-seventh of October, fifteen hundred and fifty three....and on this day, with many brutal circumstances, the sentence was executed to the encouragement of Catholic cruelty, to the scandal of the pretended Reformation, to the offence of all just men, and to the everlasting disgrace of those ecclesiastical tyrants, who were the chief instruments of such a wild and barbarous deed.”

“Servetus was not a subject of the republic of Geneva; he had committed no offence against the laws of the state; he was passing peaceably on the road, which lay through the city; he was not a member of any Reformed church; he was a useful and honorable member of society; he was a man of unimpeached morality; he was then the admiration of numbers of good judges, who afterward pleaded his cause; for from him proceeded partly, if not wholly the unitarian Baptist churches in most parts of Europe.”

There can be no question that Servetus helped to bring on his own downfall. He pestered Calvin and kept him stirred up. But that is hardly an excuse for this preacher to spend so many years of his life plotting to have his antagonist killed. When Servetus was finally in his power, Calvin had him tried for his life before a justice of the peace. He denied him the benefit of a jury trial. Even though he was a foreigner, and unacquainted with the laws of Geneva, Calvin denied him a lawyer. He denied his request to be tried before a more representative council. He denied him the right of appeal. He appointed one of his own relatives as the prosecutor. It is not easy to imagine how the most devoted Calvinist could imagine this was anything less than judicial murder.

Calvin died hard hearted and unrepentant: One of Calvinism’s most cherished notions is that if a person does not persevere in holiness, it is proof positive that he was, at best, only an nominal professor, and not a true possessor of the Spirit of God. Until the day he died, history records not the slightest repentance on the part of Calvin. This famous preacher, who lent his name to one of the most powerful religious systems of all time died hard hearted and unrepentant.

Robinson tells us, “Calvin’s hard heart never relented at the recollection of this bloody action. On the contrary he justified it by publishing after the execution a book entitled, A faithful account of the errors of Michael Servetus, with a short confutation of them: in which it is proved that heretics ought to be restrained with the sword.” The Reformers saw to it Servetus’ writings were burned, so they are not easy to come by. But in 1932, Harvard University managed to acquire and republish two of his books on the Trinity. The books are again out of print, but I have in my library xerox copies of both books. A careful reading of those two books shows that he held very much the same views as Elder Wilson Thompson did with regard to the Trinity.

Like Thompson, Servetus argued as forcefully as it is possible for anybody to argue for the full deity of Jesus Christ. You can almost see the tears running down his cheeks as he empties his very heart in declaring his undying devotion and worship for Jesus Christ the Son of God. He just could not reconcile himself to the notion of persons in the godhead, and he objected to the use of the word hypostasis in regard to Christ. One of the pretexts for burning him was his objection to the word hypostasis.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to find a Primitive Baptist who would agree either with Servetus, or with Wilson Thompson, on their views of the Trinity, but anybody, who doubts that both those men worshiped the Lord Jesus Christ from the very depths of their heart, should first read what they say, and then pronounce judgment.

Going from Servetus, as he declares his deepest devotion to his Lord, to the cold and sterile arguments of Calvin's Institutes is like walking out of the warm June sun into an ice box. Calvin's writings will freeze you to death. You cannot read Calvin without getting the idea he had ice water in his veins.

Even though Calvin had Servetus tried and burned for denying the doctrine of the Trinity, it is not at all clear that Calvin believed it himself. Servetus published his first two books on the subject in 1531 and 1532. In 1537-five years later-Calvin was himself charged with denying the doctrine. Hassell records, "It is noteworthy that in 1537 Peter Caroli accused Calvin and Farel of Anti-Trinitarianism (or Arianism and Sabellianism), because they would not enforce the Athanasian Creed, and had not used the words 'Trinity' and 'Person' in the Confession that they had drawn up" (Hassell's History, ppg 492,493).

Calvin and the early Reformers were not at all sure what they believed about the Trinity. Calvin became more and more committed to the doctrine the more he demanded that Servetus must acknowledge the Trinity or be burned.

29 Other Martyrdoms at the hand of the Prostants

Other Martyrdoms at the Hand of the Protestants

Servetus was only one of a vast multitude who were martyred at the hands of the Calvinistic Reformers. The Roman Catholic Inquisitors had been their teachers, and they had learned their lessons well.

Hassell points out that the Presbyterian Church is largely the creature of John Calvin, but it was at the first “founded by [Ulrich] Zwingli, and [only] afterwards completed by Calvin.” It “was established by law in the Canton of Zurich, May, 1524, when a decree was made, by the Council, abolishing masses, images, relics, and, afterwards, crosses and organs from places of worship” (pg. 500, footnote)

Some historians refer to Zwingli as a Baptist, and it is true he had earlier argued that infant baptism was an error, but he turned against the Anabaptists, and proved he could be just as vicious as any of the Reformers.

One year after Zwingli began the Presbyterian Church at Zurich, the magistrates issued an edict in favor of infant baptism and against rebaptism. Five years later the Presbyterians at Zurich made rebaptism punishable by death. Zwingli was killed in battle with the Catholics the next year.

Crosby goes on to record the persecution of Anabaptists by the Presbyterians during and just following the ministry of Ulrich Zwingli, “This opinion [anabaptism] prevailed so fast, that to prevent the growth of it, the magistrates of Zurich published a solemn edict against it in 1525, requiring all persons to have their children baptized, and forbidding rebaptization (sic), under the penalty of being fined, banished, or imprisoned. Another was put forth in 1530, making it punishable with death” (Crosby, vol. 1, pg xxix).

Crosby quotes from Hooke’s Apology, “In the year 1528, Hans Shaeffer, and Leonard Freek, for opposing infants baptism, were beheaded at Schwas in Germany; and Leo-pald Suyder at Augsburg for the same.

“At Saltzburg, eighteen persons of the same faith were burnt; and twenty five at Waltsen the same year.”

“Anno 1533, twenty of them were put to death in the Palatinate; and three hundred and fifty at Altze in Germany. The men were for the most part beheaded, and the women drowned.”

“Anno 1533, Hugh Crane, and Margaret his wife, with two more, were martyred at Harlem; the woman was drowned, the three men were chained to a post, and roasted by a fire, at a distance, till they died. This was the very same year that the rising was at Munster.”

“Likewise in the Protestant Cantons in Switzerland, they were used as hardly, about the same time.”

“Anno 1526, one Felix Mentz, a Baptist minister, was drowned at Zurich.”

“Anno 1530, two of the baptized brethren were burnt.”

“Anno 1531, six more of the congregation of Baptists were martyred in the same place.”

“Anno 1533, two persons, Lodwick Test, and Catherine Harngen, were burnt at Munster” (Crosby vol. 1, ppg xxix,xxx).

Crosby goes on to show that these Anabaptists, who suffered so at the hand of the Protestants, taught essentially the same as the Primitive Baptists of our day.

“There is a part of a letter, preserved in an author not to be suspected, that was written to Erasmus, out of Bohemia, dated October 10, 1519, in which an account is given of the sect then in being, and which had been in that country for above ninety years, who by the character given of them, appear to be Anabaptists; and were not only long before Stork and Muncer, but also before Luther and Calvin, who set themselves to oppose the church of Rome. The letter describes them thus:

“These men have no other opinion of the Pope, cardinals, bishops, and other clergy, than as of manifest antichrists. They call the Pope sometimes the beast, and sometimes the whore, mentioned in the Revelations. Their own bishops and priests they themselves do choose for themselves; ignorant and unlearned laymen, that have wife and children. They mutually salute one another by the name of brother and sister. They own no other authority than the scriptures of the Old and New Testament. They slight all the Doctors, both ancient and modern, and give no regard to their doctrine. Their priests, when they celebrate the offices of the mass [or communion] do it without any priestly garments; nor do they use any prayer or collects on this occasion, but only the Lord’s prayer, by which they consecrate bread that has been leavened. They believe or own little or nothing of the sacraments of the church. Such as come over to their sect, must every one be baptized anew, in mere water. They make no blessing of salt, nor of water; nor make any use of consecrated oil. They believe nothing of divinity in the sacrament of the Eucharist, only that the consecrated bread and wine do by some occult signs represent the death of Christ; and accordingly, that all that do kneel down to it, or worship it, are guilty of idolatry. That that sacrament was instituted by Christ to no other purpose but to renew the memory of his passion, and not to be carried about, or held up by the priest to be gazed on. For that Christ himself, who is to be adored and worshiped with the honor of Latreia, sits at the right hand of God, as the Christian church confesses in the creed. Prayers to saints, and for the dead, they count a vain and ridiculous thing; as likewise auricular confession and penance, enjoined by the priest for sins. Eves and fast-days are, they say, a mockery, and the disguise of hypocrites. They say, the holy days of the virgin Mary, and the Apostles, and other saints, are the invention of idle people; but yet they keep the Lord’s Day, and Christmas, and Easter, and Whitsuntide, etc.”

“This description does almost in everything fit the modern Anabaptists, especially those in England. Their saluting one another by the name of brother and sister; their choosing their own ministers, and from among the laity; their rejecting all priestly garments, and refusing to kneel at the sacrament; their slighting all authorities but that of the scriptures, but especially their baptizing again all that embraced their way, does certainly give the Baptists a better right than any other Protestants, to claim these people for their predecessors” (Crosby, ppg xxx-xxxii).

I have tried to be fair, but to be clear, in dealing with the doctrines and history of Calvinism. It has been my deepest desire to deal with the subject in a manner that will not injure the feelings of those who are involved in that system. Whether I have been successful in that endeavor will be for others to judge. I pray that those who read these lines will accept them in the spirit in which they are sent forth.

I must say in closing that for the most part, the Presbyterians in America were friends of liberty from the outset. In Europe and in England they had themselves been brutal in their persecution of those who differed with them. But when they made their way to America, they found themselves in the minority, and their conduct in America has been very different. Both before and during the Revolution, they cast their lot with the persecuted Baptists, and their help made an enormous difference in turning the tide of persecution.

We have limited our comments to Calvinism as it was developed by Augustine and the Protestant Reformers. We are presently putting together a second book which we have tentatively entitled *The London Confession: was it divinely inspired?* At this point, it is about 50% complete, and we expect it to be available some time next year (2007). In that book we will deal with Calvinism in England and America.

It has been my experience that I am much more likely to finish reading a 200 page book than I am a 400 page book. I suppose many of you have had the same experience. We have written the book to be read, so we are saving at least one half of the material for the next book. If you are interested in that book, send us your name and address, and we will notify you as soon it is available.

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