

Theology of John Calvin

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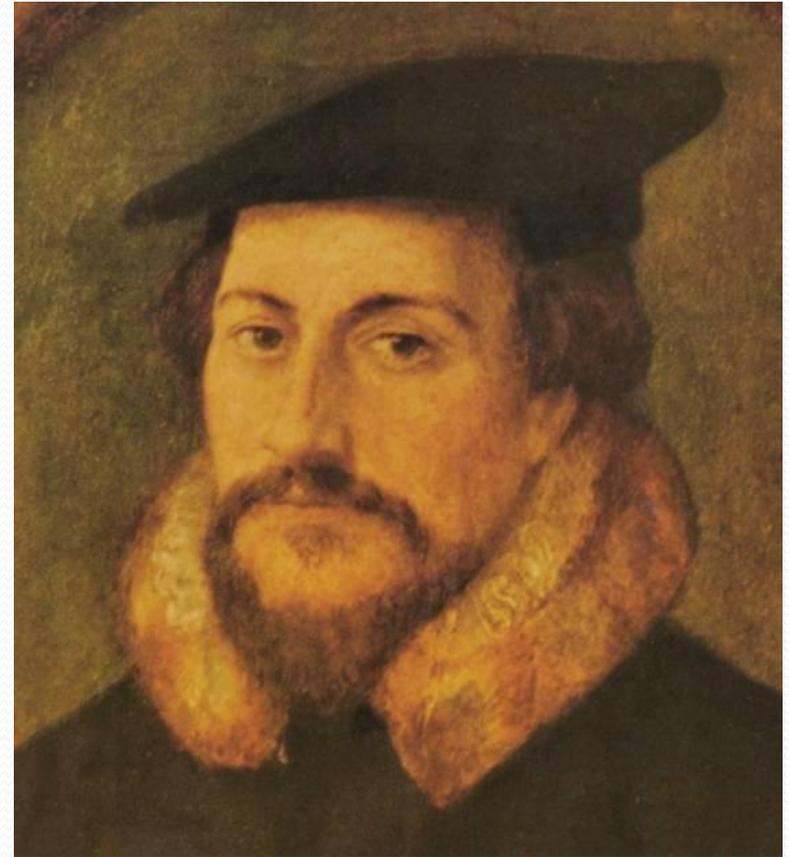
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Objectives

- Life of John Calvin
- John Calvin's Theology
 - *Scriptura Sola*
 - *The Institutes of Christian Religion*
 - Teaching and Theology
- John Calvin's Later Career

John Calvin (1509-1564)

- Born in France and received a classical education at the University of Paris
- By 1534 he had come under the influence of the Protestant movement
- Writings set the intellectual base for much of the later Protestant theology
- Sought to establish Biblical ground for humanistic concerns



Scriptura Sola (Scripture Only)

- Mastered Greek and Hebrew – original languages of the Scriptures
- Rejected anything not found in the Bible
- What is there must be followed without question
- Need to apply the Scriptures to practical issues and present circumstances



“We must now see in what way we become possessed of the blessings which God has bestowed on his only-begotten Son, not for private use, but to enrich the poor and needy.”

John Calvin

- By the age of 26 wrote *The Institutes of Christian Religion*
 - Originally written in Latin and later translated into French
 - Revised 4 times in Calvin's lifetime
 - Set forth is understanding of the nature of the true Christian faith before it was corrupted by Rome
 - Repeated many of the teaching of Augustine
 - Most important of his teaching was that God determined those who were destined for heaven and those doomed to hell prior to the time of creation

The Institutes of Christian Religion

- Book 1 – Knowledge of God the Creator and the sovereignty of God
- Book 2 – The Knowledge of God as a Redeemer in Christ
- Book 3 – The mode of obtaining the Grace of Christ
- Book 4 – The means the Holy Spirit employs in calling us effectually from spiritual death and preserving the Church – Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Book 1 The Knowledge of God the Creator – The Sovereignty of God

- Two fold knowledge of God:
 - Creator
 - Redeemer in Christ



“Since, then, the Lord first appears, as well in the creation of the world as in the general doctrine of Scripture, simply as a Creator, and afterwards as a Redeemer in Christ,--a twofold knowledge of him hence arises...”

Book 1 - The Knowledge of God

- Knowledge of God is implanted naturally in human but is stifled or corrupted.

“I only say, that, when the stupid hardness of heart, which the wicked eagerly court as a means of despising God, becomes enfeebled, the sense of Deity, which of all things they wished most to be extinguished, is still in vigour, and now and then breaks forth.”

Book 1 - The Knowledge of God Through His works

- First Class of works
 - Motions of the heavens and the earth
 - Symmetry of the human body, and the connection of its parts
 - The powers and actions of the soul – proof of its separate existence from the body
- Second Class of works – clear evidence of the perfections of God
 - His goodness, justice, and mercy
 - His providence, power, and wisdom
 - Power of God to inspire the righteous with the hope of future life, and remind the wicked of the punishments reserved for them

Book 1 – God's Sovereignty

- God wills whatever happens in the physical world and in human history – assures his own glory
- His will is inscrutable - all of his decisions are Just
- Need of Scripture as a Guide and Teacher

Book 2 – The Knowledge of God as a Redeemer in Christ

- The subject of original sin is considered – a man has no means within himself, by which he can escape from guilt
- Necessary that the eternal Son of God should become man and assume a true human nature. Also shows in what way the divine and human nature constitute one person

Book 3 – The Mode of Obtaining the Grace of Christ

- Benefit of Christ when united to us by the Holy spirit
- Justification by faith saves some, and these go on to sanctification
- Justification comes through the work of Christ in the believer's behalf
- God justifies only those believers in Christ whom he elects to receive into favor
- Predestination – Most important of his teaching was that God determined those who were destined for heaven and those doomed to hell prior to the time of creation



“The special election which otherwise would remain hidden in God, he at length manifests by his calling.

“For whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified”, that he may one day glorify” (Rom 8:29, 30)” Book 3 Chapter 24

Book 3 – The Eternal Election - Predestination

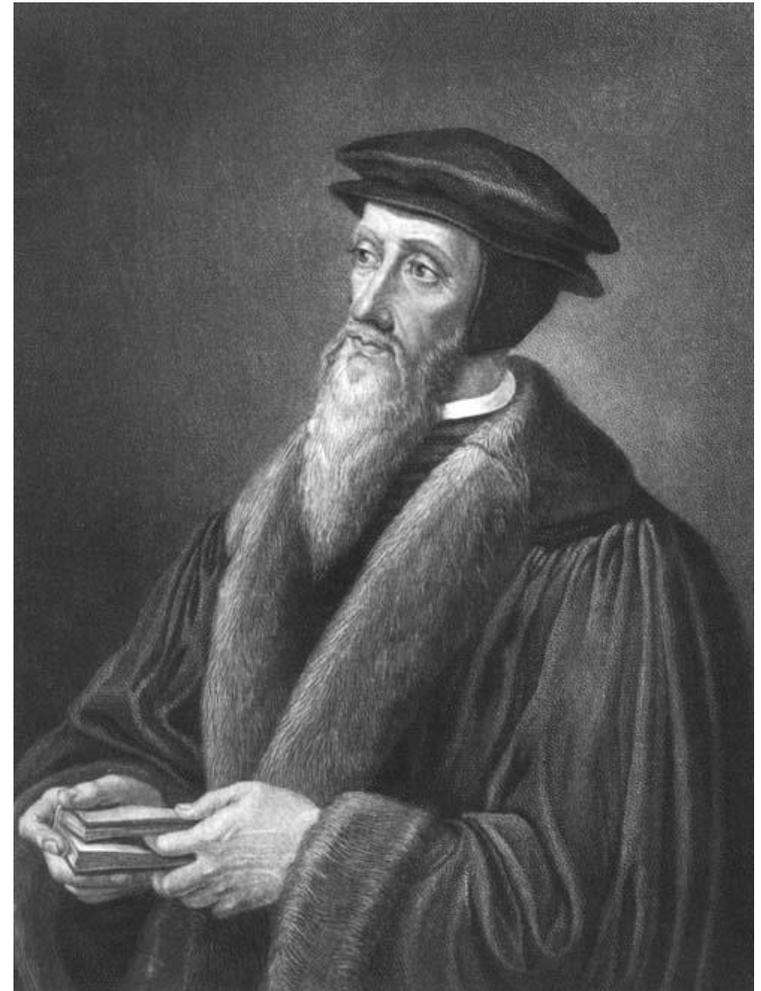
- Establishes the certainty of salvation, peace of conscience, and the true origin of the church
- Salvation is a free gift, however, God knows who is save and who is not
- Those who are save are “living saints” and their salvation is not contingent on anything they do
 - Saints will be those who pray, attend divine service, work hard, are honest, thrifty and generous of spirit
 - Charity and relief of poverty are an essential sign of being counted among the saints

Book 4 Baptism and Lord's Supper

- Baptism
 - Sign and evidence of our purification
 - We are to receive it in connections with the promise “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16)
- Lords Supper
 - Spiritual feast instituted by Christ
 - Exhibits the great blessings of redemption and Christ himself
 - Souls are fed by Christ just as the corporeal life is sustained by bread and wine
 - Refutes the Transubstantiation

Other Works

- Wrote many volumes of commentary on most of the books of the Bible
- Thousands of sermons, letters, and hymns
- Published a psalter (all matters relating to worship had to be biblical) – psalms replaced hymns in worship



Teaching and Theology

- Stressed the power but also the love of God – not an angry but a gentle, kind God
- Only the Bible gives access to the truth about God
- All men and women are created in order that they may know the majesty of God

Teaching and Theology

- Five points, making up the word **TULIP**, are used to summarize Calvin's Doctrine
 - **Total Depravity of Man**
 - **Unconditional Election** – God chooses or “elects” his children
 - **Limited Atonement** – the death and resurrection of Christ is substitutionary payment for the sins of God's “elects”
 - **Irresistible Grace** – God call cannot be ignored
 - **Perseverance of the Saints** – not possible for one to lose his salvation

John Calvin's Later Career

- Calvin served as a minister in the Reformed Church of Geneva, Switzerland, and then in Strasbourg
- Invited back to Geneva and remained there until his death in 1564

John Calvin

- Virtually the ruler of Geneva
- He himself was given to hard work and simple living and he impressed this upon the city
- He discouraged frivolity of any kind
- Encouraged commerce and industry as well as lending money at reasonable rates of interest
- Encouraged education and founded the University of Geneva
- Under Calvin's leadership, Geneva became the home of the oppressed Protestants from all over Europe

John Calvin – Social Responsibility

- Relief for the poor
- Construction of hospitals, schools (which were free) and new prisons
- Consumer protection laws
- Provision for refugees
- Sanitation system

Summary

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