

THE NEW CALVINISM

Apologetics
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0. INTRODUCTION

0.1. NEO-CALVINISM

- Abraham KUYPER (1837-1920) *Lectures on Calvinism* (Princeton University 1898)
 - In the philosophical sense, we understand by it that system of conceptions which, under the influence of the master-mind of Calvin raised itself to dominance in the several spheres of life.
 - Calvinism has captured and guaranteed to us our constitutional civil rights; promoted the revival of science and art, opened new avenues to commerce and trade, beautified domestic and social life, exalted the middle classes to positions of honor, caused philanthropy to abound,
 - Calvinism still carries in itself a wondrous power for the future of the nations.
 - Bancroft *History of the United States III*, (1876): From God were derived its theories of ontology, of ethics, of science, of happiness, of human perfectibility, and of human liberty. God himself, wrote Jonathan Edwards, is, "in effect, universal Being."

0.2. THE NEW CALVINISM (JOHN PIPER)

Twelve features of the New Calvinism:

1. The New Calvinism, in its allegiance to the inerrancy of the Bible, embraces the biblical truths behind the five points (TULIP), while having an aversion to using the acronym or any other systematic packaging, along with a sometimes qualified embrace of limited atonement. The focus is on Calvinistic soteriology but not to the exclusion or the appreciation of the broader scope of Calvin's vision.

2. The New Calvinism embraces the sovereignty of God in salvation, and in all the affairs of life in history, including evil and suffering.
3. The New Calvinism has a strong complementarian flavor as opposed to egalitarian, with an emphasis on the flourishing of men and women in relationships where men embrace a call to robust, humble, Christ-like servant leadership.
4. The New Calvinism leans toward being culture-affirming rather than culture-denying, while holding fast to some very culturally alien positions, like positions on same-sex practice and abortion.
5. The New Calvinism embraces the essential place of the local church. It is led mainly by pastors, has a vibrant church-planting bent, produces widely-sung worship music, and exalts the preached word as central to the work of God locally and globally.
6. The New Calvinism is aggressively mission-driven, including missional impact on social evils, evangelistic impact on personal networks, and missionary impact on unreached peoples of the world.
7. The New Calvinism is inter-denominational with a strong (some would say oxymoronic) Baptist element.
8. The New Calvinism includes charismatics and non-charismatics.
9. The New Calvinism puts a priority on pietism or piety in the Puritan vein, with an emphasis on the essential role of affections in Christian living, while esteeming the life of the mind and being very productive in it, and embracing the value of serious scholarship. Jonathan Edwards would be invoked as a model of this combination of the affections and the life of the mind more often than John Calvin, whether that's fair to Calvin or not.
10. The New Calvinism is vibrantly engaged in publishing books and even more remarkably in the world of the internet, with hundreds of energetic bloggers and social media activists, with Twitter as the increasingly default way of signaling things new and old that should be noticed and read.
11. The New Calvinism is international in scope, multi-ethnic in expression, culturally diverse. There is no single geographic, racial, cultural governing center. There are no officers, no organization, nor any loose affiliation that would encompass the whole. I would dare say that there are outcroppings of this movement that nobody (including me) in this room has ever heard of.
12. The New Calvinism is robustly gospel-centered, cross-centered, with dozens of books rolling off the presses, coming at the gospel from every conceivable angle, and applying it to all areas of life with a commitment to seeing the historic doctrine of justification, finding its fruit in sanctification personally and communally.

0.3. MARK DEVER

Nine Marks of a Healthy Church

1. Mark One: Expository Preaching
2. Mark Two: Biblical Theology
3. Mark Three: The Gospel
4. Mark Four: A Biblical Understanding of Conversion
5. Mark Five: A Biblical Understanding of Evangelism
6. Mark Six: A Biblical Understanding of Church Membership
7. Mark Seven: Biblical Church Discipline
8. Mark Eight: A Concern for Discipleship and Growth

9. Mark Nine: Biblical Church Leadership

0.4. THE NEW CALVINISM (WWW.NEWCALVINIST.COM)

1. Doctrinal errors

New Calvinism has a reputation for teaching the biblical doctrines of Calvin (TULIP). Charles Haddon Spurgeon and Jonathan Edwards are held up as heroes of the movement. But the reality is that while paying lip service to Calvin, Spurgeon and Edwards, New Calvinism, in fact, is weak in matters of doctrine. New Calvinists seek to contextualize the gospel of truth to make it relevant to the postmodern world. Tim KELLER is a major protagonist of this view.

2. Antinomianism

The New Calvinism movement is characterized by a careless attitude towards God's moral law. A common assertion is that Christians are no longer under God's law, but under God's grace. It follows that the Christian life is not to be governed by a set of rules, or a set of commands, or a list of do's and don'ts, for Christ's grace has set us free. Obedience is not a popular concept. The subject index of Piper's blueprint for Christian Hedonism, *Desiring God* (1987), contains over twenty references to happiness, but only one to obedience.

3. Worldliness

All forms of contemporary music, even punk rock, and hip-hop are accepted as permissible for Christians to enjoy. Those who say that these forms of conduct are not right for Christians are labelled as legalists, just like the Pharisees

4. Contemporary Worship

5. Emerging Church

1. HISTORY

1.1. ORIGINS

<http://blogofdan.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/YOUNG-RESTLESS-REFORMED.pdf>

In 2007, in a series of blog posts on the 9Marks website (later updated in a hour long lecture delivered at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington DC),³ Mark Dever asked a very important question: "Where did all these Calvinists come from?" He proposed that 12 factors were responsible:

- i) Charles Spurgeon
- ii) Martyn Lloyd-Jones
- iii) The Banner of Truth Trust
- iv) Evangelism Explosion
- v) The inerrancy controversy
- vi) Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)
- vii) J. I. Packer
- viii) John MacArthur and RC Sproul
- ix) John Piper
- x) Reformed Rap
- xi) Influential parachurch ministries (e.g. Grace to You, Ligonier, Desiring God, Together for the Gospel, Sovereign Grace, Acts 29, 9Marks)
- xii) The rise of secularism and decline of Christian nominalism
- Others have suggested that to this list should be added the success of Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology, the growth in seminaries, and Crossway books (which would become the leading publisher of books from New Calvinist authors).

1.2. PERSONALITIES

<https://www.understanding-ministries.com/docs/New%20Calvinism%20is%20not%20like%20Calvin.pdf>

- **John Piper:** Desiring God Ministries. Student of Fuller Theological Seminary which advocated a liberal theology and a weakened view of Scripture. Indebted to Daniel Fuller who denied the full and inerrant inspiration of Scripture. Also inspired by CS Lewis who was not evangelical.
- **Mark Dever:** senior pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington DC.
- **Tim Keller:** leader of Redeemer church in New York. Co-founder (with DA Carson) of The Gospel Coalition. Promoter of many heretical teachings and practices. His books have appeared in the top 10 of the New York Times best-seller list.
- Gabe Lyons; founder of Q Ideas, a ‘learning community’ to mobilise Christians to advance the common good in society.
- **Albert (Al) Mohler:** President of Southern Baptist Theological College, Louisville, USA. Has worked several times with, and supported, the compromised Billy Graham, who spoke at his inauguration. A signatory of the ecumenical Manhattan Declaration. Endorses hip-hop culture. Has been on the board of Focus on the Family, the chief self-esteem organisation.
- Joshua Harris: pastor of Covenant Life Church, Gaithersburg, Maryland after CJ Mahaney in 2004.
- Michael Goheen: Director of Theological Education at Missional Training Centre, Phoenix. Professor of Missiology at Calvin Theological Seminary.
- CJ Mahaney: formerly a Charismatic church leader in partnership with Larry Tomczak of Covenant Life Church, Gaithersburg, Maryland and co-founder of People of Destiny International. After an acrimonious split with Tomczak he became interested in Calvinism and Reformed theology. Senior Pastor of Sovereign Grace Church in Louisville. In 2011 took voluntary leave of absence after charges of abuse levelled against him by a former Sovereign Grace pastor, then re-instated. Former president of Sovereign Grace Ministries; he resigned in 2013 after lawsuits regarding abuse. Popular leader in New Calvinism.
- **Mark Driscoll:** Pastor of Mars Hill Church, Seattle. Founder of Acts 29 church planting network, which has planted 400 churches. He is the world’s most downloaded pastor. Founder of Resurgence, a theological co-operative producing church resources. Spoke to 400 evangelical men at the London Men’s Convention at the Albert Hall, London, in May 2011. Driscoll is renowned for perverse, vulgar language, using sexual innuendoes and telling crude stories. His church website even provided links to two pornographic websites. He once preached in church wearing a t-shirt saying, ‘Body piercing saved my life’. Other T-shirts said, ‘Jesus is my homeboy’, ‘Mary is my homegirl’, a skull and cross bones, and an image of drag queen Jesus (!). I feel uncomfortable even recording this in writing. He has mocked Biblical characters (‘John the Baptist is a freak’). He once said that Genesis is ‘filled with redneck comedy ... like all of Genesis takes place in a trailer park’. In his book Vintage Jesus (2008) he says that ‘Jesus ... needs Praxil ... then he ignores his own mom ... Jesus needs sensitivity training’ and much more in this vein. Driscoll is thus irreverent and blasphemous. Wayne Grudem and John Piper praised this book. Driscoll has also supported tattoos saying, ‘Jesus loves tattoos’ and his church supports tattoo artists.
- James MacDonald: senior pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel, Chicago.
- Matt Chandler: lead pastor at The Village Church, Dallas, president of Acts 29 Network.
- Frances **Chang;** former teaching pastor of Cornerstone Church in Simi Valley, California. Founder of Eternity Bible College.
- Kevin **DeYoung;** pastor in the Reformed Church in America denomination.
- Ligon Duncan III: Presbyterian church leader. President of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals.
- John Armstrong: retired pastor and church planter. Adjunct professor of evangelism at Wheaton College. Prolific author. Founder of ACT 3. Compromised by New Perspective on Paul doctrine.
- **John MacArthur:** senior pastor of Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California; founder of ‘Grace To You’. President of The Master’s College and The Master’s Seminary. MacArthur is a

confused Reformed-Dispensationalist who does not even understand that his Dispensationalism is at odds with Calvinism; he has also equivocated on Limited Atonement and denies double predestination. For a long time he denied the eternal generation of the Son until confronted.

- Phil Johnson: subordinate leader in John MacArthur's church. Executive Director of Grace To You.

- On the outermost fringe are RC **Sproul** [senior minister at St Andrew's, Sanford, Florida; founder of Ligonier Ministries; probably the most conservative Calvinist in this list]. Don **Carson** [Carson is theological professor and a very helpful writer but has made some un-Reformed statements and unwise associations]. Wayne **Grudem** [noted Charismatic-Reformed theologian].

1.3. ORGANISATIONS

- Together for the Gospel
- Desiring God Ministries (John Piper).
- The Gospel Coalition: founded by Tim Keller and DA Carson. Claims to be a Reformed collection of American leaders dedicated to the Biblical Gospel.
- Acts 29 church planting network (Driscoll, Chandler).
- Sovereign Grace Ministries (CJ Maheny).
- 9 Marks (Dever).
- Q Ideas (Lyons).
- Together for the Gospel conference (Mahaney, Duncan, Mohler, and Dever).
- Redeemer City to City church planting network (Keller).
- Churches Helping Churches (founded by Driscoll and MacDonald).

2. ATTITUDES

2.1. COMPLACENCY (CALVINIST)

Greg DUTCHER *Killing Calvinism – How to Destroy a Perfectly Good Theology from the Inside*

- One – By Loving Calvinism as an End in Itself
- Two – By Becoming a Theologian Instead of a Disciple
- Three – By Loving God's Sovereignty More Than God Himself
- Four – By Losing an Urgency in Evangelism
- Five – By Learning Only from Other Calvinists
- Six – By Tidying Up the Bible's "Loose Ends"
- Seven – By Being an Arrogant Know-It-All
- Eight – By Scoffing at the Hang-ups Others Have with Calvinism

2.2. CONTROVERSY (ANTI-CALVINIST)

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| CHAPTER 1 | IS CALVINISM THE GOSPEL? |
| CHAPTER 2 | UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION/REPROBATION EXPLAINED |
| CHAPTER 3 | UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION/REPROBATION SCRIPTURALLY REFUTED |
| CHAPTER 4 | LIMITED ATONEMENT EXPLAINED |
| CHAPTER 5 | LIMITED ATONEMENT SCRIPTURALLY REFUTED |
| CHAPTER 6 | IRRESISTIBLE GRACE EXPLAINED |
| CHAPTER 7 | IRRESISTIBLE GRACE SCRIPTURALLY REFUTED |
| CHAPTER 8 | TOTAL DEPRAVITY EXPLAINED |
| CHAPTER 9 | TOTAL DEPRAVITY SCRIPTURALLY REFUTED |
| CHAPTER 10 | PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS EXPLAINED |

3. SUGGESTED ANSWERS

3.1. DIVINE-HUMAN ENCOUNTER

- Tertullian: „Credo quia absurdum“(?)

3.2. BIBLICAL TEXTS

- **Rom 9:20-24** But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? (ὦ ἄνθρωπε, μενοῦνγε σὺ τίς εἶ ὁ ἀνταποκρινόμενος τῷ θεῷ) Will what is molded say to its molder (μὴ ἐρεῖ τὸ πλάσμα τῷ πλάσαντι), "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use? ²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory – ²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?
- **Eph 1:3-6** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love (καθὼς ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ) ⁵ he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ (προορίσας ἡμᾶς εἰς υἰοθεσίαν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς αὐτόν), according to the purpose of his will (τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ), ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.
- **1 Pt 1:1-2** Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion (ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς) in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood (κατὰ πρόγνωσιν θεοῦ πατρὸς ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος εἰς ὑπακοὴν καὶ ῥαντισμὸν αἵματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ): May grace and peace be multiplied to you
- **2Pt 1:10-11** Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure (διὸ μᾶλλον, ἀδελφοί, σπουδάσατε βεβαίαν ὑμῶν τὴν κλήσιν καὶ ἐκλογὴν ποιεῖσθαι), for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

3.3. ATTITUDES TO GO BY

Whatever theology we hold to it is useful only in so far as it leads us to a sincere and exuberant worship and praise of God.

- **Rom 11:22** Note then the kindness and the severity of God (ἴδε οὖν χρηστότητα καὶ ἀποτομίαν θεοῦ·)
- → joyful WORSHIP of God
- → trusting the attribute of the absolute GOODNESS of God
- → evangelistic ZEAL
- → humbly submitting to ANY of God's decisions
- → always seeing the CROSS of Christ in the centre of theology and living
- → lively LOVE relationship with God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit