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**Calvinism**

**Directions:** Below, you will find two different articles written about Calvinism. One of the articles is an excerpt from a modern Christian organization. The other article is from the Encyclopedia Britannica. After reading both of the articles, your task will be to complete the questions that follow in complete sentences using textual evidence when required to support answers.

**from “What is Calvinism?” by Matt Slick1**

01Calvinism, also known as reformed theology, is a movement within orthodox 02Protestantism that was developed by John Calvin (1509-1564), a French theologian. 03John Calvin was eight years old when Martin Luther posted his 95 theses. Calvin 04and Luther never met...

05...Calvin produced many commentaries on various books of the Bible, but he his 06best known for his seminal work known as *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, a . . . 07work expounding Christian theology, which he published at the age of 26.

08The system of Calvinism adheres to a very high view of scripture and seeks to

09derive its theological formulations based solely on God’s word. It...[states] that God is

10able and willing by virtue of his omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence to do 11whatever He desires with His creation. It also maintains that within the Bible are the 12following teachings: That God, by His sovereign grace, predestines people into 13salvation; that Jesus died only for those predestined; that God regenerates the 14individual to where he is then able to and wants to choose God; and that it is 15impossible for those who are redeemed to lose their salvation.

16Arminianism, on the other hand, maintains that God predestined but not in an 17absolute sense. Rather, He looked into the future to see who would pick Him, and 18then He chose them. Jesus died for all peoples’ sins who have ever lived and ever 19will live—not just Christians. Each person is the one who decides if he wants to be 20saved or not. And finally, it is possible to lose your salvation (some Arminians believe 21you cannot lose your salvation).

22Calvinism emphasizes the sovereignty of God and his eternal decrees by which he 23has ordained whatsoever shall come to pass. Calvinists take the Bible very seriously 24and try to harmonize all its concepts. It teaches monergism, that salvation is 25accomplished in God’s work alone, and that nothing occurs in the world except that 26God has given permission. Some critics have maintained that Calvinism makes God 27the author of evil, but Calvinists are quick to deny such an accusation and teach that 28God is sovereign even over the forces of evil and that he uses evil within his eternal 29plan for the world and mankind.

**“Calvinism”** **by William J. Bouwsma 2**

01Calvinism, the theology advanced by John Calvin, a Protestant reformer in the 16th 02century, and its development by his followers. The term also refers to doctrines and 03practices derived from the works of Calvin and his followers that are characteristic of 04the Reformed churches.

05While Lutheranism was largely confined to parts of Germany and to Scandinavia, 06Calvinism spread into England, Scotland, France, the Netherlands, and English-07speaking colonies of North America, and parts of Germany and central Europe. This 08expansion began during Calvin’s lifetime and was encouraged by him. Religious 09refugees poured into Geneva, especially from France during the 1550s as the French 10government became increasingly intolerant but also from England, Scotland, Italy, 11and other parts of Europe into which Calvinism has spread. Calvin welcomed them, 12trained many of them as ministers, sent them back to their countries of origin to 13spread the Gospel, and then supported them with letters of encouragement and 14advice. Geneva thus became the centre of an international movement and a model 15for churches elsewhere. John Knox, the Calvinist leader of Scotland, described 16Geneva s “the most perfect school of Christ that was on the earth since the days of 17the Apostles.”

18Calvinism was immediately popular and was appealing across geographic and social 19boundaries. In France it was attractive primarily to the nobility and the urban upper 20classes, in Germany it found adherents among both burghers and princes, and in 21England and the Netherlands it made converts in every social group. In the Anglo-22Saxon world, Calvinist notions found embodiment in English Puritanism, whose ethos 23proved vastly influential in North America beginning in the 17th century. It seems 24likely, therefore, that Calvinism’s appeal was based on its ability to explain disorders 25of the age afflicting all classes and to provide comfort by its activism and doctrine.

26It is important to note that the later history of Calvinism has often been obscured by a 27failure to distinguish between Calvinism as the beliefs of Calvin himself: the beliefs of 28his followers, who, though striving to be faithful to Calvin, modified his teaching to 29meet their own needs; and, more loosely, the beliefs of the Reformed tradition of 30Protestant Christianity, in which Calvinism proper was only one, if historically the 31most prominent strand. The Reformed churches consisted originally of a group of 32non-Lutheran Protestant churches in towns in Switzerland and southern Germany. 33These churches have always been jealous of their autonomy and individuality, and 34Geneva was not alone among them in having a distinguished theological leadership. 35Huldrych Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger in Zurich and Martin Bucer in Strasbourg 36were also influential throughout Europe. Their teachings, especially in England, 37combined with those of Calvin to shape what came to be called Calvinism.

38Developments in Geneva are illustrative of the fate of Calvinism elsewhere. In 1619 39they reached a climax and the Synod of Dort in the Netherlands, which spelled out 40various corollaries of predestination, as Calvin had never done, and made the 41doctrine central to Calvinism. Although the synod was provoked by a local 42controversy, it was attended by representatives of Reformed churches elsewhere and 43assumed universal importance.

44Calvinism underwent further development as theologians, apparently dissatisfied with 45Calvin’s loose rhetorical writing, adopted the style of Scholastic theologians and even 46appealed to medieval Scholastic authorities. The major Calvinist theological 47statement of the 17th century was the *Institutio Theologia Elenctcae* (1688: *Institutes* 48*of Elenctic Theology*) of Fancois Turretin, chief pastor of Geneva. Although the title 49of his work recalled Calvin’s masterpiece, the work itself bore little resemblance to the 50*Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536); it was not published in the vernacular, and 51its dialectical structure followed the model of the great *Summa theologia* of St. 52Thomas Aquinas and suggested Thomas’s confidence in the value of human reason. 53The lasting significance of this shift is suggested by the fact that Turretin’s work was 54the basic textbook in theology at the Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey, 55the most distinguished intellectual centre of American Calvinism, until the middle of 56the 19th century.

57Historians of Calvinism have continued to debate whether these developments were 58essentially faithful to the beliefs of Calvin or deviations from them. In some sense 59they were both. Although they abandoned Calvin’s humanism, there were 60precedents for these changes in the contrary aspects of his thought. They were 61untrue to Calvin, however, in rejecting his concern to balance contrary impulses. 62These changes, moreover, suggest the stage in the development of a movement that 63Mex Weber called “routinization”—the stage that comes after a movement’s creative 64beginnings and, as a kind of reaction against the disorderly freedom of individual 65creativity, represents the quite different values of order and regularity. It is also 66relevant to explaining these changes in Calvinism that they occurred during a period 67of singular disorder, caused among other things by a century of religious warfare, 68which generally produced a longing for certainty, security, and peace.

1 Slick, Matt. "What is Calvinism?" Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry. 2013,

https://carm.org/what-is-calvinism

2 Bouwsma, William J. “Calvinism.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica,

Inc., 24 Jan. 2017, www.britannica.com/topic/Calvinism.

01.) In “What is Calvinism?” by Matt Slick, he mentions that Calvin was eight years old when Martin Luther created his 95 theses and that the two never met. In relation to our brief historical discussion in class, what do you believe the purpose of this inclusion was? (11-12.RN.3.2)

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02.) In “What is Calvinism?” by Matt Slick, the author states that “Calvinism adheres to a very high view of scripture and seeks to derive its theological formulations based solely on God’s word. It...[states] that God is able and willing by virtue of his omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence to do whatever He desires with His creation.” How does this particular belief relate to the Christian notion of predestination (that is, the Christian idea believing that all that will happen, especially with regard to the salvation of some and not others)? (11-12.RN.2.1)

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03.) Using textual evidence to support your response, reiterate at least one major difference between Calvinism and Arminianism. (11-12.RN.2.1)

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04.) After reading “What is Calvinism?” by Matt Slick, utilize textual evidence to support what assertion Calvinists would make about the existence of free will? (11-12.RN.2.2)

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05.) William Bouwsma in “Calvinism” refers to the branch of theology as being “characteristic of the Reformed churches.” In understanding the etymology of such a phrase, what church (or branch of theology) did Calvinism **re**form from? (11-12.RV.2.1)

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06.) Lines 05-17 of William Bouwsma’s “Calvinism” describes the practice of training ministers from foreign nations and sending them back to their native countries to spread the word of Calvinism. According to the discussion during class, would this have been a dangerous undertaking for the said ministers? How so? (11-12.RN.2.2)

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07.) In “Calvinism” by William Bouwsma, an explanation is offered as to why Calvinism was so popular and easy to spread prior to the Puritans coming to North America. Using evidence from the text to support your answer, discuss what Bouwsma sees as one of the most prevalent reason for this. (11-12.RN.2.1)

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08.) Using evidence from the text to support your response, what did Fancois Turretin highlight or emphasize when he, in a way, revised some of the core doctrines of Calvinism? (11-12.RN.2.1)

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