

# What are the Roots of Calvinism?

## How to study Scripture and History

Don Cole

Today, we will look at the Five Points of TULIP (aka Calvinistic Doctrine)

Why is it important to understand this doctrine? Simply stated, this doctrine impacts the way protestants and evangelicals look at the Bible; how they interpret and what God is requiring of them according to the Scriptures.

### Five doctrines of TULIP:

1. **(T) Total Depravity (total inability)** = means that individuals do not have the ability to respond to God until God regenerates and gives the individual the gift of faith. In other words, the individual is completely dead in sin and cannot initiate repentance on his own! Even after salvation, he is unable to initiate his faith to obey! The god unilaterally awakens the dead soul and infuses faith/love (Manichaeism).

**However, the TaNaKh teaches** that man is corrupt and fallen. While he has the propensity or inclination to sin; however, he does have free will to respond to YHVH. Acts 17:30 states that all men are to repent, and they do so on their own volition. Again, in 2 Peter 3:9, we see that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

2. **(U) Unconditional Election** = Some are saved without any requirements to meet on their part. This means that God chooses some (random selection) for salvation in Christ. While at the same time, He leaves others in their lost condition, by not choosing them.

**However, the TaNaKh teaches** = John 3:15-16: “that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John Wesley was repulsed by Calvin’s doctrine of Election, John Wesley said “this picture of God is worse than the Devil”.

3. **(L) Limited Atonement** = Christ did not die for all mankind, only for the Elect! Calvin stated, “God arranges all things by his sovereign council in such a way that individuals are born who are doomed from the womb to certain death and are to glorify him by their destruction”. Jesus died for **ONLY** the Elect on the Cross.

**However, the TaNaKh teaches** = 1Jn 2:2: Yeshua is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the *sins of the whole world*.

4. **(I) Irresistible Grace** = If you were chosen to be saved, then you are unable to resist the call of God. God’s grace is irresistible. This means that there is nothing you can do to stop his call -- even against your will!

**However, the TaNaKh teaches** = That God invites *all* humans to believe in Christ and to seek divine help to live a godly life. In John 6:37, Yeshua said: “All that the Father has given Me shall come to me...” and verse 44 says that those who come to God come because God draws them.

5. **(P) Predestination (perseverance of the saints)** = If God has chosen you to be saved, then you will persevere to the end and will not or cannot depart from the faith. Therefore, you cannot lose your salvation! In essence, “once saved always saved.”

**However, the TaNaKh teaches** = 1 Peter 1:16-17: “since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” And if you call on Him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct

yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile". Philippians 2:12: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,"

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**What is Gnosticism:**

- Babylon was a province of Persia, during the 4th century, a branch of Gnosticism developed. This was called Manichaeism. Manichaeism spread to Syria, Northern Arabia, Egypt, and North Africa. Saint Augustine, who lived in North Africa, was a follower of Manichaeism from 373-382.

Gnostics believed that to have salvation one must possess a certain knowledge, or *gnosis*, which must be delivered to a person by a messenger of light. However, to receive this knowledge, one must be trying to reach beyond the evil, dark, material, physical earth, and body toward the good, light, immaterial, and spiritual worlds. Anything that is material is evil. The indwelling spark must be awakened from its terrestrial slumber by the saving knowledge that comes "from without." Gnostics say that Jesus is one of the most fundamental "awakeners" of this knowledge. Therefore, although Gnostics, like Christians, find salvation through the message of Jesus, Gnostics seek salvation not from sin but from "the ignorance of which sin is a consequence."

Jesus is identified by some Gnostics as **an embodiment of the supreme being who became incarnate to bring gnosis to the earth**, while others adamantly denied that the supreme being came in the flesh, claiming Jesus to be merely a human who attained enlightenment through gnosis and taught his disciples to do the same.

In summation, although Gnostics, like Christians, find salvation through the message of Jesus; **however, Gnostics, seek salvation not from sin** but from "the ignorance of which sin is a consequence." They believe that the evil creator God and his angels cause this ignorance.

**Scriptures:** In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, Messianic believers directly attacked Gnosticism. For example:

1 Timothy 1:3-4: "Stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies." The letter urges Timothy to "Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge (*gnosis*), which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith." (6:20-21)

2 John 7: "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is a deceiver and an antichrist." This passage warns against the gnostic teaching that Jesus was entirely a being of light, whose physical body (and its suffering) was only illusory.

The short Letter of Jude was written to warn of "certain men... who have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality..." (1:4)—a probable reference to gnostic teachers who allegedly taught that Christians could dispense not only with the Jewish kosher and circumcision laws, but also with the commandments against adultery and fornication.

Acts 8:9-11, 18-23. Simon was a Gnostic Sorcerer

**Extra Notes:**

- An important Christian semi-gnostic leader was Marcion, a mid-second century teacher who gained a significant following in the Church of Rome. Marcion accepted the gnostic proposition that the Hebrew Creator-God was actually the *Demiurge*<sup>1</sup> described in gnostic literature, and thus a different being from the heavenly father of Jesus Christ. He proposed that the Hebrew Bible scriptures should be rejected by Christians, while accepting only a shortened version of the Gospel of Luke and the letters of Paul as authoritative.

<sup>1</sup>Gnosticism believes that the Demiurge created the world in Gnosticism. He was identified as the god of the Old Testament. He was inferior to the true God because he created this evil world. They further purported that the god of the Old Testament was mean.

**Questions:**

1. Did the Messianic Body let the Gnostics in the Body of Messiah?
2. How did Yeshua's Messianic Body treat these Gnostics?
3. Total Depravity (total inability) What is the cause of our sin?
  - a. Do we sin, because we are sinners? (In other words, no matter what we do, we sin.)
  - b. Or, are we sinners, because we sin? (In other words, each individual is accountable for his own sin.)

**HOMEWORK:** *objective: what Scriptures would you use to counter Calvinist teaching (TULIP)?*