

Beliefs of calvin and augustine



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The Traditional Calvinist view to the doctrine of “ *Perseverance of the saints*” finds its origin in the philosophy of the sixteenth-century Swiss Reformer John Calvin (1509-1564). He wrote and published the first edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. This is the most about writing on systematic theology which the world had ever known at that time. To this present day his belief have pervade spread through the Protestant world. Because God is sovereign over all His creation, Calvin argued, He must be the sole actor in the salvation of His human creatures. He believed that any response, prior to regeneration, from a depraved human being would make God less than sovereign in human redemption.

John Calvin drifted from his Roman Catholic faith while studying the vast writings of Augustine, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Hippo (354-430). He constantly praised Augustine’s work with frequent quotes and references from his writings. Many prominent Calvinists acknowledge that Calvin’s fundamental beliefs were through the writings of Augustine and were already formed while he was still a faithful Roman Catholic. He systemized Augustine’s doctrines, which have been developed, for the most part, the Five Points of Calvinism presented today. Augustine’s influence remained with him throughout his life.

The beliefs of Calvin and Augustine embody the Five Points of Calvinism presented today. Just as the Synod of Dort, (the synod which first formally presented these points as the Five Points of Calvinism-TULIP),[1]was a Calvinistic Synod, so John Calvin was an Augustinian. These Augustinian teachings that he presented in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* included the sovereignty of God, which made Him the cause of everything,

including sin, election, and the predestination of the elect to salvation and of the non-elect to damnation.

Professor Herman Hanko, co-authored one of several books called *The Five Points of Calvinism*, written to explain and defend Calvinism, says that:

Boettner agrees. He says:

Calvinist theologian R. Laird Harris states that:

We see that John Calvin took what Augustine had written and refined it. Many of our doctrines that we understand and recognize today have developed from earlier stages of belief. This is the case with the doctrines of Augustine. An example of this is the doctrine of Eternal Security. He did not teach this, but he was a crucial figure in establishing the root source that is the basis in which this doctrine could develop in to how we understand it today. With a little research, one can understand how his influence on theology as a whole goes without question. The foundational beliefs, biases, and doctrines that many believers have today, Protestants and Catholics, are to be discovered in the beliefs of Augustine. While most Calvinist and Catholic theologians agree with Augustine, some Protestants do not. However, most of them, if not all, will acknowledge his huge influence on Christian beliefs and doctrines.

Augustine was born November 13, 354 in Tagaste Numidia. He was brought up in a divided household:

Augustine's father was not a Christian and directed his son towards secular knowledge which could bring him an income. When he became an adult, Augustine moved to Carthage and he took an interest in debating.

Around the year 375, Augustine became a Manichaean Gnostic. Augustine was a Manichaean for nine years and was greatly influenced by them, whose doctrines were heretical. The Gnostics believed in two gods, one evil and one good. Some Gnostic groups renounced marriage and procreation. Many believed that the dualism of flesh and spirit-the flesh being evil and the spirit being good. Many historians have noted that Augustine has brought this Manichaean influences into the Church. The Manichaean teachings are believed to have influenced Augustine's doctrine of the "total depravity" of mankind, the "elect" and "predestination." These are the foundations and essential elements of the doctrine of Eternal Security that was to follow after Calvin got a hold of them.

Because of Augustine's sinful lifestyle, he could not advance in the Manichaean religion. He had a reputation of being a fornicator and a "womanizer." Historian James O'Donnell, is a University Professor at Georgetown University. He says:

Later Augustine became a skeptic and turned to the philosophy of Neo-Platonism (a form of thought rooted in the philosophy of Plato). He began to merger these beliefs with his Gnostic and Christian beliefs. Augustine's writings were strongly influenced by his studies in Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, and the Christian Scriptures. Much like Calvinists today, he used Scripture out of context to match his theology.

In 384, Augustine went to Milan as a incredulous professor of rhetoric. Before he left Milan in 388, he had been baptized by Ambrose and was indebted to Ambrose's Catholic Neo-Platonism, which provided a philosophical base that eventually transformed Christian theology.[2]

Augustine was not only influenced by the Manichaeian Gnostics, but he was also being influenced by his mentor Ambrose. Ambrose had absorbed the most up-to-date Greek learning, Christian and pagan alike-notably the works of Philo, Origen, and Basil of Caesarea and of the pagan Neo-Platonist Plotinus.[3]With his “ philosopher” ideas mixing Scriptures with Platonism with its elements of mysticism and some Judaic and Greco-Roman reading, he influenced Augustine in his theology. Maybe this is why, that no one that has ever lived has influenced Christian theology as Augustine has. He is responsible for much of what we consider to be “ Catholic” doctrine today. Not surprisingly, he is also credited with being a major participant in Protestant beliefs as well.

The historian Jaroslav Pelikan remarked:

Commenting on Augustine's book entitled, *The City of God*, the historian Edward Gibbon wrote:

[1]A century after the Reformation a reaction against this extreme Genevan Calvinism developed around Amsterdam pastor and theologian, Jacob Arminius. After his untimely death in 1609, some of his followers, the Remonstrants, pressed his denial of Calvinism in five points. At the Synod of Dort (1618-19) they were banished from the Netherlands Reformed churches
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by the Calvinists, who set out their doctrine in five opposing points, the famous acronym, TULIP.

[2]Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., *Saint Ambrose* , (Last accessed 7/31/15):
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/19014/Saint-Ambrose>

[3]Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., *Saint Ambrose* , (Last accessed 7/31/15):
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/19014/Saint-Ambrose>