The Unfinished Reformation
Part Two
Victor Christensen

In the beginning the gospel was conveyed to the people in the Hebrew idiom and embedded in the language of the street. There was no such thing as specialized theological terminology. However, by the second century biblical interpretation became the prerogative of professional interpreters who spoke Latin and whose conceptual parameters belonged to a culture alien to biblical thinking. In a real sense, and as a natural consequence, Christianity was reinvented.

When separated from their host language the Scriptures acquired new conceptual parameters quiet different to their original context. Biblical teachings were given a makeover so extensive original understandings were erased and morphed into ideas contrary to apostolic teachings and to what the gospel actually teaches. There exists compelling evidence that from the second century onwards Western or Latin Christianity developed a new interpretation of Jesus and a radically revised gospel to the one taught in Scripture. However, for the sake of brevity this series of articles will restrict their focus to the sixteenth century writings of Martin Luther and John Calvin.

We are told that Aristotle was “one of the greatest intellectual figures of Western history. He was the author of a philosophical and scientific system that became the framework and vehicle for both Christian Scholasticism and medieval Islamic philosophy.” In one significant area Calvin came under the influence of Aristotle. In his 1532 commentary on Seneca's De Clementia Calvin accepted the thesis of Aristotle that the universe functions within the framework of theistic fatalism. Later when he became a Protestant he discovered that Augustine, influenced by Plato, also taught theistic fatalism and this encouraged Calvin to make theistic fatalism the organizing principle for his entire teachings.

In his Institutes Augustine became the authority most cited on theistic fatalism by Calvin. With authorities such as Aristotle, Plato and Augustine teaching it Calvin came to believe the concept of fate was a universal truth so obvious any thinking person was compelled to believe it. And by allowing himself to become a prisoner of his own instincts Calvin imagined that he found his own thoughts embedded in Scripture. So began another dark age for the church.

“By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself … some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestined to life or to death.” (Institutes chap. 21 sec. 5)

Calvin entered Protestantism in agreement with the thesis that the universe is under the mechanistic control of a deity who provides an original script to which the created order is rigidly programed to follow. In Calvin’s Protestant writings the Aristotelles “Unmoved Mover” took on the persona of the biblical God Yahweh and fatalism became Calvin’s Christian doctrine of predestination. By investing the biblical God with the attributes of a pagan deity Calvin organized a greater departure from the Scriptures than any single individual had accomplished before him except Constantine.

The distortion of the gospel by Calvin under the influence of Aristotle and Augustine was not a matter of deliberate intention but more an accident of history. It arose out of a shift to a cultural environment alien to biblical teaching in which fatalism represented a norm in scholastic understanding. Augustine, Calvin and Luther all subscribed to versions of fatalism because they could not believe that the natural order could act independently of divine control.

According to the Calvinists article of faith; “There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passion.” It seems, however, that the deity invented by the Calvinists is not entirely without “passion.” According to Calvin his deity “hates” humanity in general but allows himself to have a limited number of “elected” favourites. “[W]e are … hated by God and he only begins to love us when we are united to the body of his beloved Son.”

Fortunately bad theology does not cut the honest seeker for truth off from God but there has to come a time of reformation when Calvinism is exposed for what it is. Taken as it reads the Calvinists deity has no actual form (pure spirit, invisible without body or parts), and according to Calvin, “hates” everybody except the elect. Calvin’s negative perception of deity is the natural result of his belief in theistic fatalism. The Calvinists concept of God is based on a gross caricature of the biblical God and is destined to be consigned to the dunghill of historic misconceptions.
The Calvinists perversely understand of God is the nature consequence of their belief in the doctrine of theistic fatalism.

“The nature of providence is not mere foreknowledge but active governance of events. God not only watches over but actively regulates all individual events, so that nothing takes place by chance … for no man can act, or even speak, except as God wills. God’s providence also regulates natural occurrences such as the wind (no wind ever arises or increases except by God’s express command.)” (Institutes bk. 1, chap. 16)

Calvin’s doctrine of predestination is a clone of Aristotle’s concept of the universal nous or Soul whose vibrations were the first cause of all movement in the universe albeit Calvin denied that he taught fatalism. In his Mechanics Aristotle wrote, “There must then be a principle of such a kind that its substance is activity. … among entities there must be some cause which moves and combines things.” (1Inst. bk.1, chap. 16, sec.8, 2Aristotle, Metaphysics)

For Aristotle the thing “which moves and combines things” is identified as “an immortal, unchanging being” and in Calvin’s writings Aristotle’s “immortal, unchanging being” takes on the persona of the biblical God Yahweh. It is widely recognized that Aristotle’s fatalism supplied the imagery for Calvin to teach his doctrine of predestination.

“Aristotle’s conception of a God, outside of the world, causing all motion in nature, supplying the efficient cause for the universe, was just suited for a philosophy whose primary purpose was to find confirmation for the Church. The fact that Aristotle’s God was devoid of all qualities so essential for a religious Divine Creator offered small difficulty to the theologians, whose minds were very quick to find reasons and explanations even for things most mysterious.” (Henry Alphern, An Outline History of Philosophy (Forum House, 1969) p.11)

When Calvin imposed the profile of Aristotle’s” Unmoved Mover” on Yahweh and identified Him as the “first cause of all that happens” he employed the precise language of Aristotle to identify God as the author of both good and evil. By doing that he step outside the realm of biblical thinking and introduced pagan notions of deity into the church. (Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God, p.181)

Calvin says; “… the reason why God elects some and rejects others is to be found in His purpose alone. … before men are born their lot is assigned to each of them by the secret will of God. … [T]he predestination to death of those who perish is … the will of God. … God has chosen to salvation those whom He pleased, and has rejected the others, without our knowing why … (Commentaries: Romans and Thessalonians, pp.203, 208)

“[A]ngels and men, good and bad, do nothing but what is appointed by God; … [and] all movements are secretly directed to their end by the hidden inspiration of God. … Satan and all the wicked … do nothing save at the secret instigation of God … Satan himself performs his part, just as he is impelled, [by God] … things, which men do perversely, are of God, and are ruled by his secret providence.” (Institutes bk.1, chap. 1, sec. 2)

“[T]he devil and all the ungodly are reined in by God, so that they cannot conceive, plan or carry out any crime, unless God allows it, indeed commands it. They are … forced to serve him… “Whatever things are done wrongly and unjustly by man, these very things are the right and just works of God.” “[H]ow foolish and frail is … the suggestion that evils come to be not by [God’s] will.” “What wickedness soever men commit … proceed also from the will of God.” (1Inst. bk.2, chap. 17, sec 10, 2The Eternal Predestination of God, p.16, ibid p.176, 4bk.1, chap, 16, sec.8, 5The Doctrines of Election)

In Calvin’s doctrine of predestination ground on theistic fatalism the biblical God is the “first cause” of all that is evil. And Calvin, albeit unconsciously, acknowledged an element of spiteful intention his bifurcated deity in his following comments, “I maintain that the reprobate are hateful to God.” “God could not look upon us, only to hate us; because there is nothing but wretchedness in us.” (1Inst. bk.3, chap.24, sec.17, 2The Doctrine of Election)

In its numerous versions Calvinism has become the dominate force in mainstream Christianity with potential for considerable political clout. But if the Calvinists doctrine of irresistible fate is true how do we explain the following text?

“The people have forsaken Me and have profaned this place by making offerings in it to other gods … they have filled this place with the blood of innocents, and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or decree, nor did it come into My mind.” “The Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves.” (Jeremiah 19:4-5, Luke 7:30)
The Calvinists god is not the biblical God but he bears a striking resemblance to a mythical entity invented by pagan philosophers’. Luther’s comments aptly describe Calvinism; “I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust be right, then is your God also true; and, on the other hand, if your trust be false and wrong, then you have not the true God.” (The First Commandment, Large Catechism)

The eschatological prophecies of Daniel warn of the rise of an endtime pseudo Christianity, of which it is said; “a god unknown to his ancestors he will honour.” This deity is the inventor of multiple errors all adapted to suit the prejudices and preferences of failed religion. The Apocalypse tells us who he is, as it is written; “they worshipped the serpent” who is identified in another place as “that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan.”

Whoever teaches; “Whatever things are done wrongly and unjustly by man, these very things are the right and just works of God,” and “Satan and all the wicked … do nothing save at the secret instigation of God”, and “God could not look upon us, only to hate us” and “God must hate us” by that very thing misrepresents God to the people and they identified themselves as an apostle of dark forces and deceivers of the people. (1The Eternal Predestination of God, p.16, 2Inst. bk.1, chap.1, sec. 2, 3The Doctrine of Election, 4Calvin's sermon on Galatians 2:15-16. Eerdmans, 1949)

Thomas Jefferson wrote; “I can never join Calvin in addressing his god. … his religion was Demonism. If ever man worshipped a false god, he did. The being described in his 5 points is not the God whom you and I acknowledge and adore, the Creator and benevolent governor of the world; but a demon of malignant spirit. It would be more pardonable to believe in no god at all, than to blaspheme him by the atrocious attributes of Calvin.”(Letter to John Adams, April 11, 1823)

According to the biblical testimony at a point just before the return of Jesus God will have a people who will challenged failed Christianity to repent of its errors and put away false doctrine. They will denounce all false religion that tells lies about God. They will proclaim the truth that Christ “died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.” It will be explained that reconciliation comes at the cost of total surrender and on the condition of a merger between humanity and divinity in Jesus. Then will it be known that only when Jesus has everything that belongs to us will He make us sharers in everything that belongs to Him. (2Corinthians 5:15)