**Augustine / Calvin Comparison**

**What’s the Difference?**

Both Augustine and Calvin argue for predestination, and it can be difficult to tell the difference between them. This chart shows a synopsis of their views and directly compares them so that you can see where they agree and where they differ. Augustinian views were upheld by the Roman Catholic Church, but Calvinism was condemned by the same church as heresy. This chart may help you to see why.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Augustine**  | **Calvin** |
| 354-430 | 1509 - 1564 |
| Early Church Father – Informed Roman Catholic Doctrine | Protestant Reformer – Influenced by Augustine |
| On Grace and Free WillOn Rebuke and Grace | Institutes of the Christian Religion |
| Before the fall Adam had free will and could have abstained from sin | The fall was as the result of an absolute and positive decree of God |
| Original sin was committed at Eden through concupiscence | Humanity is totally depraved because of the fall |
| Concupiscence – the desire to turn away from God and toward mankind (evident through the act of sex) |  |
| Original sin is passed on through sex. Only Jesus didn’t inherit original sin since he was born from a virgin |
| We were seminally present in Adam when he ate the fruit from the tree, so we share his guilt |
| Our essential human nature (liberium arbitrium) is free |
| We have lost our moral liberty (libertas) |
| Our second nature is sinful and overrides our essential human nature | Eternal rewards or punishments are determined by God before birth |
| Human beings have both free will and are predestined otherwise there would be no moral exhortations in scripture. | Calvinistic Fatalism – We cannot choose a good act without God’s grace |
| We freely choose only to sin | We are too wrapped up in sin to be able to obey God by ourselves. |
| We all deserve to be punished as we are all massa peccati – a lump of sin | God exercises his sovereignty by decreeing who is saved and who is damned |
| We need God’s grace and Christ’s atonement to do good | The doctrine of the election / Doctrine of the living saints |
| God chooses the elect to be saved | No one who has rejected Christ can be saved. |
| We are judged only by God’s grace, not by our works or deeds | The reprobates are totally depraved and destined to suffer in eternal damnation no matter what they do. |
| God is merciful for saving some of us. | Limited atonement means Christ’s death atones for some people’s sin, but not all. |
| Irresistible grace (*gratia irresistibilis)* means that any good behaviour from humans is only evidence of God’s grace, not of our merit | God’s grace is irresistible: The elect cannot commit apostasy and turn away from God |
| Those who are saved are known as the remnant | God gives grace to the elect only so that they can be saved (Justification by Faith) |
| Single predestination – God chooses the elect but doesn’t actively reprobate anyone | Double predestination – God actively chose who would be saved and who would be damned. |
| Predestination for hell is based on God’s foreknowledge rather than his action | Predestination is based both on God’s foreknowledge and his active decree. |
| No one knows who or why we are saved | It is a divine mystery whether we are saved or damned, but we may be able to tell where we are predestined for by our evident faith or evident lack of it. |
|  | Later at the Synod of Dort (1619), Calvinists argued:Total Depravity – humanity is corrupt |
| Unconditional Election – God chose who would be saved |
| Limited Atonement – Christ’s death was only for some |
| Irresistible grace – we cannot escape God’s choice |
| Perseverance of the saints – the elect will never give up their faith |

The most significant point of contention between Augustine and Calvin is over the issue of double predestination. There is some disagreement regarding the extent to which they differ on this. The Roman Catholic Church argues that Calvin preaches double predestination by saying that God actively chooses both the elect and the reprobate, whereas Augustine claims that God only actively choses the remnant, and merely passively refrains from selecting the reprobate. In this model, God foreknows who will be damned but doesn’t actively damn them. The reason this is a problem is that double predestination appears to make God the author of sin which Augustine refutes. Augustine places the choice to sin firmly at humanity’s door.