**Section 1c: John Calvin’s Predestination Theory**

**Background**

* Several centuries later, John Calvin (1509-1564) presented his predestination theology.
* Calvin, was one of the leading figures in the reformation (check out the ‘reformation’ on the internet). His predestination theory is known as the ‘Doctrine of Election’.

**Doctrine of Election**

**Sinful Nature**

* Calvin, like Augustine, argued that all humanity is totally sinful. Moreover, like Augustine, Calvin blamed ‘the fall’ of Adam and Eve for this.
* Calvin believed that the result of ‘the fall’ is that humanity cannot respond in at all to the message of God held in the pages of the Bible i.e. humanity cannot choose to obey the commands of God because we are completely slaves to the temptation of sin.
* Calvin does not necessarily mean people are always carrying out sinful acts, however, in terms of salvation (following God’s commands to achieve heaven post-mortem) the whole of the human race, is without hope. Due to ‘the fall; the temptation to sin is too great.

**Hope for some**

* However, this does not mean that Calvin believed that all humanity was predestined to damnation (an eternity in hell). He believed that some people would receive salvation (an eternity in heaven) from God.
* Therefore, Calvin’s theory is ultimately based on the idea that it is God alone who determines who will be saved and who will not.

**The elect and the reprobates**

* Therefore, Calvin believed that God made among people two predestined groups: the elect and the reprobates.

**THE ELECT (a.k.a. The Saints):**

* If a person belongs to the elect then they have been chosen by God to have their sins forgiven, through the atonement of Jesus Christ (Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, allows the sins of the elect to be passed to Him)
* The elect have done nothing to deserve this good fortunate; it is a mystery (from a human perspective) why some are chosen by God and others are not.
* Calvin did argue it was possible for the elect to guess their status as an elect. The is because they can feel the **“the calling of God**.” i.e.they have an inward certainty that God has chosen them for salvation.
* Moreover, Calvin believed the elect would generally show traits of been elect. This is because they would partly reflect their Godly status. For example, they would be hard-working, honest etc., some believed because of these traits it would mean they would become wealthy (but they would do good works with their wealth).
* Importantly, Calvin did state that the elect could still be sinful. However, God predestines them to have faith in the atonement of Jesus. Therefore, when they sin they cannot resist the calling on their lives to seek forgiveness, and therefore their sins will be passed to Jesus and they will remain sinless (and thus at death achieve salvation).

**THE REPROBATES (a.k.a. the Damned):**

* The reprobates are also (from a human perspective, at least) chosen randomly by God. Calvin believed that the reprobates were more likely to show traits of why they will go to hell post-mortem.
* For Calvin, such traits include laziness and addiction to sinful such as: alcoholism, gambling etc. Therefore, at the end of their lives the sin on their hearts would automatically condemn them to hell; there was nothing they could have done about it in their lifetime.
* The reprobates could still have done morally worthy actions during their lifetimes but, according to Calvin, they would have been unable to resist sin at various points in their lives.
* However, the reprobates will be predestined not to have faith in Christ’s atoning nature, therefore their sins will remain on their hearts. Therefore, the reprobates remain in sin and these sins will condemn to hell post-mortem.

**Synod of Dort**

* Several decades after Calvin’s death, the Synod of Dort (1619) occurred. The Synod of Dort was an international meeting organised by the ‘Dutch Reformed Church’ to settle the predestination and free will debate.
* Calvin’s supporters (known as Calvinists) summed up his ‘Doctrine of Election’ into five points (sometimes summoned up with the acronym T.U.L.I.P.):
1. **Total Depravity:** humans are totally corrupted by sin because of ‘the fall. They cannot choose good over evil.
2. **Unconditional Election**: God alone chooses the elect. Election is not based upon any good works of the moral agent during their lifetime.
3. **Limited Atonement**: Christ's death and atonement for human sins was for the elect only.
4. **Irresistible Grace**: the elect cannot resist the inward calling to believe ‘the gospels’ and therefore seek forgiveness of sin through Jesus’ atonement.
5. **Perseverance of the Elect**: the elect will remain in a state of irresistible grace until they reach salivation.