



A Publication of CJF Ministries and Messianic Perspectives Radio Network

# Messianic Perspectives®

*God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.*

## New Calvinism

*The Young Calvin*

**The Young,**

**Restless,**

**Reformed**

BY GARY HEDRICK

During the 16th century, a small group of brave reformers changed the world. A corrupt and power-hungry religious system centered in Rome had dominated all of Western Civilization for centuries—and God raised up dissenters to oppose the religious “deep state” of their day. They started a movement that came to be known as the Protestant Reformation.

Men like John Calvin, Martin Luther, and others sought to “re-form” the religious landscape in Europe by replacing the manmade errors of Catholicism with countering truths derived directly from Scripture. Their grace-based system of theology stood in stark contrast to the works-based system of medieval Roman Catholicism.

## ONCE UPON A TIME IN GERMANY

This is a period of history that many Christians don’t know much about. The story of the Reformation begins with Martin Luther (1483–1546), a Catholic priest and professor at the University of Wittenberg in Germany.

One day, Luther encountered a man on the street who was selling “indulgences” on behalf of the pope. An indulgence was a Catholic document certifying “remission of temporal punishment”—that is, the forgiveness of sins in purgatory. So, this Vatican representative was telling people they could have their sins forgiven (and their time in purgatory reduced) by giving him money—and that incensed Luther.<sup>1</sup>

Who can blame him? Poor and sincere Catholics were being exploited and victimized in the name of God. They couldn’t read the Bible in their own language, so many lay people in those days had no way of searching out these matters for themselves.<sup>2</sup> They were dependent on a corrupt clergy to tell them what the Latin Scriptures said. Luther was so vexed over this state of affairs that he compiled a list of 95 points (in Latin) explaining why the sale of indulgences was shamefully wrong. Then, he defiantly nailed the list to the door of Castle Church in Wittenburg for everyone to see.<sup>3</sup>



Luther Posting His 95 Theses in 1517  
Ferdinand Willem Pauwels

## Messianic Perspectives®

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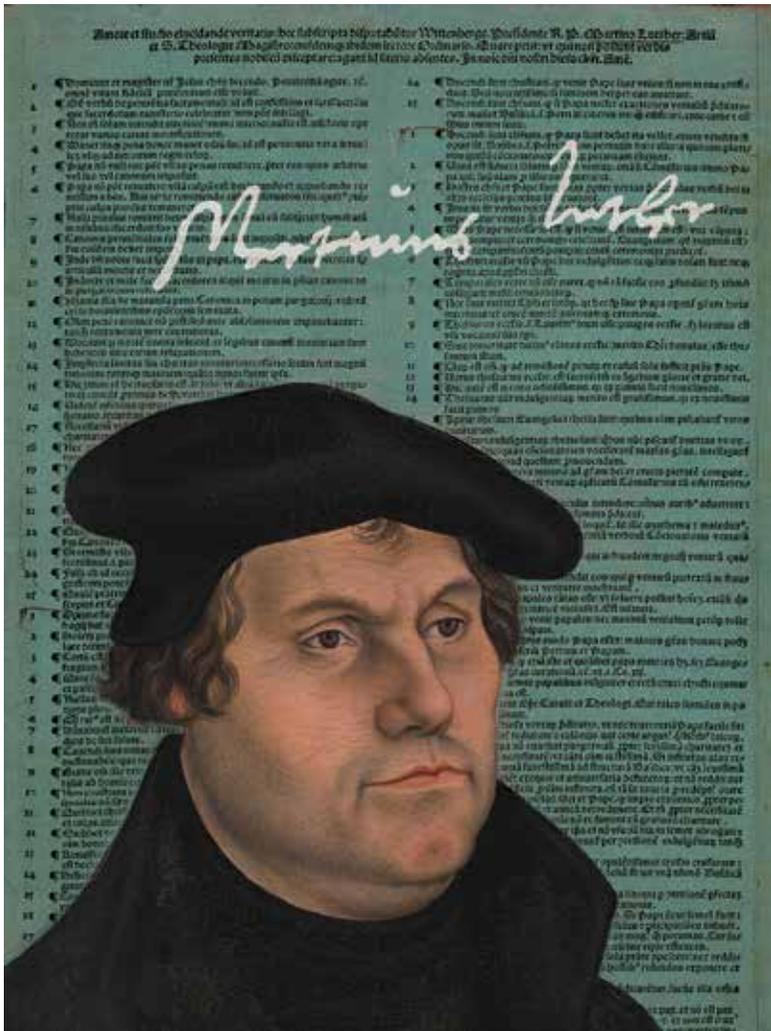


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That’s what ignited the flames of the Protestant Reformation in 1517. The Roman Catholic Church, in league with her powerful political patrons, was robbing sincere people who thought they could pay the “Church” to have their sins (and those of their departed loved ones who were in purgatory) forgiven.

It was a despicable and dishonorable practice—not to mention unbiblical—and Martin Luther, a Catholic priest, stood up to the pope and denounced it.<sup>4</sup> He and his followers became known as “protestants” because they were protesting against the errors and abuses of medieval Catholicism.

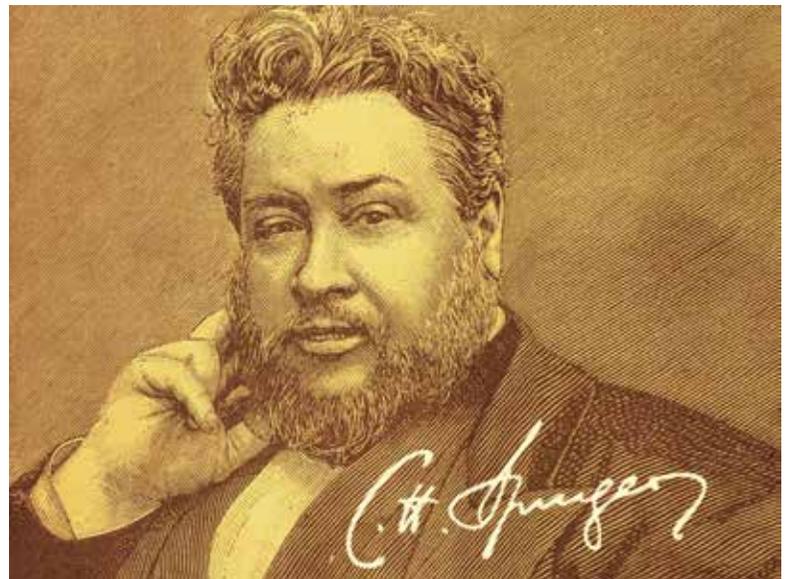


## THE RISE OF REFORMED THEOLOGY

The reformers believed they had recovered the teachings of the early Church—teachings that had been obscured and obfuscated over the intervening centuries by the institutional church and its traditions. They came up with five *solae* (Latin for “only” or “alone”) to summarize the distinctive features of what would later become the battle cry of the Reformation:

1. *Sola Scriptura*—“Scripture alone”
2. *Sola Fide*—“Faith alone”
3. *Sola Gratia*—“Grace alone”
4. *Sola Christus*—“Christ alone”
5. *Sola Deo Gloria*—“Glory to God alone”

This message was powerful, timely, and desperately needed. As time passed, the Reformed movement in Europe became more diverse. Followers of Luther in the German realm (“Lutheranism”) became differentiated from Calvinists on the Scottish and Dutch sides. In England, Anglicanism (the Church of England) also emerged during the Reformation, casting itself in the drama as a *Via Media*, a “Middle Way” between Catholicism and Protestantism.



The winds of change were blowing in that part of the world, but the change came at great cost. The religious powers—that-were didn’t relinquish their control over the masses easily, and literally hundreds of courageous reformers were martyred for their faith. They were denounced by the Inquisition as heretics, convicted in religious kangaroo courts, and burned at the stake in public executions to serve as a warning to others.

Instead of discouraging the Reformers, however, this persecution only fueled their resolve. For every Reformer they burned at the stake, God raised up many others to take his (or her) place!

Those are the origins of Reformed (or Calvinist) Theology. It’s a belief system that was forged in the crucible of much pain and persecution in 16th-century Europe. Much of the story was written in the blood of martyrs.

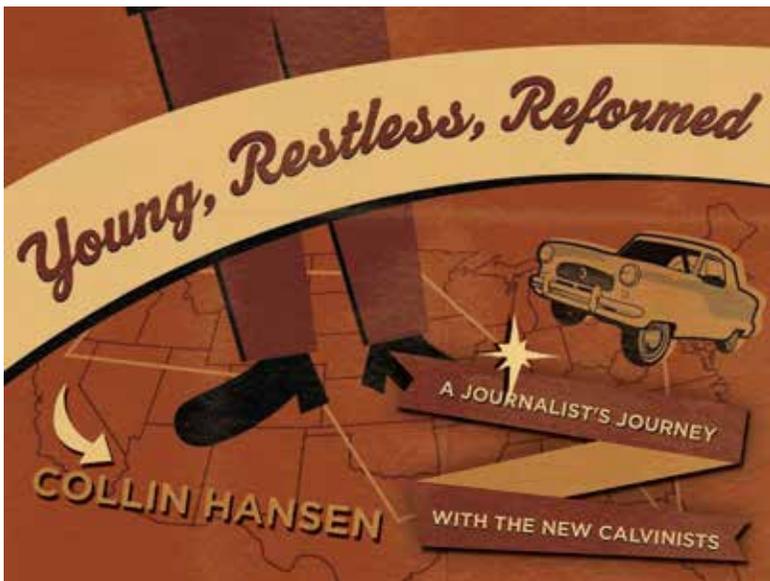
Later, in the mid-1950s, the founder of our ministry, a young Jewish believer named Charles Halff (1929–2000), began reading the writings of a 19th century British Baptist pastor-theologian named Charles Spurgeon. The more he read, the more he felt an affinity for Spurgeon’s moderate, Reformed approach to Scripture.<sup>5</sup>

## YOUNG, RESTLESS, REFORMED

Fast-forward now to the 21st century. Traditional Calvinism has undergone a remarkable transformation in our generation. Many contemporary Calvinists still adhere to the five TULIP points:

- T = Total Depravity
- U = Unconditional Election
- L = Limited Atonement
- I = Irresistible Grace
- P = Perseverance of the Saints<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the traditional, five-point TULIP people, however, we now have four-pointers, and even three- and three-and-a-half pointers. While Calvinism was once a decidedly minority position in the Christian world, at least in North America, and often controversial, it is now not only embraced by some large churches and their leaders, but it has become surprisingly fashionable.



Collin Hansen's 2008 book, *The Young, Restless, Reformed: A Journalist's Journey with the New Calvinists*,<sup>7</sup> was one of the first attempts to study the new and fast-growing New Calvinist phenomenon. The author is editorial director for The Gospel Coalition, the umbrella organization for much of today's New Calvinist movement.



*The Young and the Restless*, they tell me, is the longest-running TV soap opera in history. CBS debuted the show in 1973 and incredibly, it's now (as of 2020) in its 47th season. It's been on the air for so long, the original cast members have all either retired or died. It features self-absorbed characters from two rival families who go out of their way to be culturally relevant—and who know how to walk, talk, and dress the part. They are intent on not making the mistakes their parents made. Y&R, then, has become a metaphor, of sorts, for everything that's cool and trendy in our culture.

This cultural stereotype has given rise to the term “hipster,” which is a bit harder to define. Generally, it refers to youngish adults who do their best not to conform to the cultural norms of the previous generation. In a superficial culture, they see themselves as being different because they appreciate style, authenticity, and *la difference* (uniqueness). In their quest to be different, though, they end up being surprisingly identical to millions of other hipsters as they conform to their own sub-culture. So much for non-conformity!

Young, Restless, and Reformed (YRR) is the New Calvinist stereotype because the movement is populated by so many young adults who identify with that hipster sub-culture. They tend to look, dress, talk, and even think similarly. Many of them are young, educated professionals who are raising (and often homeschooling) children, so that's a common bond, as well.

## THIS ISN'T YOUR GRANDPA'S CALVINISM

If you're interested in church history, you may be aware that an earlier “Neo-Calvinist” movement arose back in the 1800s.<sup>8</sup> While the recent New Calvinist movement shouldn't be confused with its older counterpart, the two do share some common characteristics.

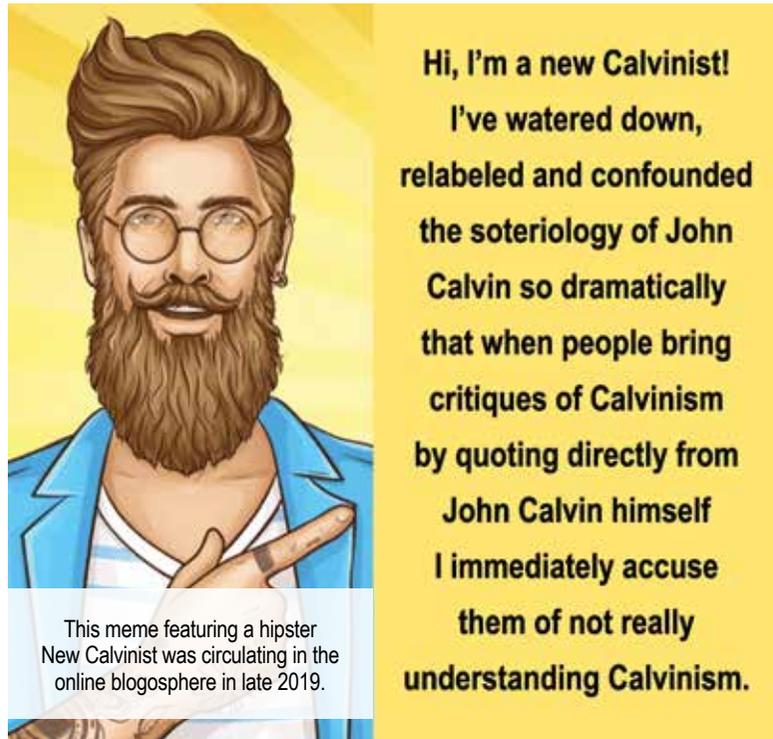
For one thing, today's New Calvinists are focused on engaging and redeeming the prevailing post-Christian (and largely secular) culture. They seek to employ a distinctively Christian worldview to impact and shape our society. This was also the mantra of the Dutch Neo-Calvinist Abraham Kuyper (in the late 1800s and early 1900s), who wanted Christian faith to impact every aspect of human society. He said there should be no distinction between the secular and the sacred—everything is subject to the lordship of Christ.

However, today's New Calvinists are more flexible and culturally sensitive than the Neo-Calvinists were a century ago. The old-school Neo-Calvinists had no interest in repackaging Calvinistic doctrine to make it more culturally acceptable—something our New Calvinist friends these days have managed to do with great skill and finesse. Furthermore, the demographics of the two movements are different—Neo-Calvinism in the 1800s didn't appeal mostly to younger people (like today's New Calvinism, with its generational component, does). Its leaders, in fact, were older, politically engaged European Christians.



Nonetheless, the emphasis of many New Calvinists today on personal discipleship and holiness would have resonated with the old-school Neo-Calvinists in Europe.

Despite the similarities, however, today's New Calvinism and the older Neo-Calvinism are two distinct movements—and New Calvinism has received accolades never accorded to its elder counterpart. For instance, *Time* magazine (March 12, 2009) listed the then-fledgling New Calvinist movement as one of “10 Ideas Changing the World Right Now.”<sup>9</sup>



## SO, WHAT'S THE ATTRACTION?

Aside from the magnetism of being drawn to a community of believers who are roughly the same age and have similar backgrounds and interests, what else do these New Calvinists have in common?

Some observers have pointed out that large numbers of young evangelicals seem to have gravitated to New Calvinism because they don't like the fluffy, feel-good emphasis and shallow, live-your-best-life-now theology of many contemporary megachurches and ministries. Others say they see New Calvinism, in part, as a 2000s reaction to the “seeker-friendly” movement of the 1980s and 90s.

Michael Houdmann writes, “[The New Calvinist] movement is sweeping through American evangelical churches of all denominations, attracting young people from Free Church, Episcopal, Independent, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches alike. The Gospel Coalition (thegospelcoalition.org), started in 2007, is the national network for the New Calvinist movement.”<sup>10</sup>



## ARE NEW CALVINISTS “REAL” CALVINISTS?

In a word, yes. They're real Calvinists. More broadly, they are thoroughly Reformed in their theology. They like the term “New Calvinist,” though, because it distinguishes them from older, more traditional Calvinists who typically have worn the five TULIP distinctives like a badge of honor.

This new breed of Calvinist tends to be more in sync with cultural sensitivities and they aren't afraid to think outside the traditional box. They don't mind overlooking or reinventing aspects of Calvinistic dogma that many people find offensive—like Reprobationism, for example.

## TGC ON HYPER-CALVINISM

Hyper-Calvinism is a subset of Calvinism that's populated by people who (we believe) take Calvin's teachings to unwarranted extremes. They extend his ideas about unconditional Election to include not only who goes to Heaven, but also who goes to Hell. Theologians call this latter view “Reprobation” or “Double Predestination.”

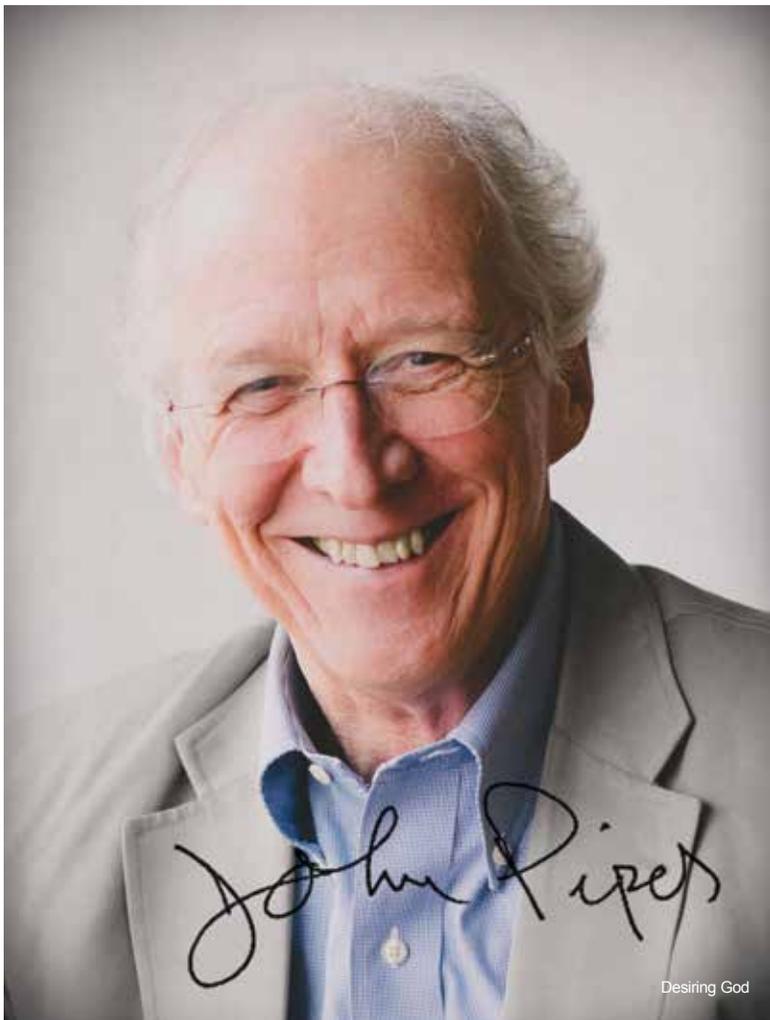
This doctrine says that God condemned non-elect people to Hell unconditionally (that is, apart from anything they would ever say or do), even before they were born. The only criterion for that choice was the Lord's own “good pleasure.”

Calvin called it a “dreadful” notion (his choice of words) that God unconditionally decreed, before He created the world, not only who would go to Heaven, but also who would go to Hell. So, some of us have made this our litmus test for Hyper-Calvinism. That is, if someone insists that God predestines certain people to Hell, irrespective of any exercise of their own free will, we classify that person as a hyper-Calvinist.<sup>11</sup>

## WHAT ABOUT REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY?

Another problem in the New Calvinist community these days (besides the teaching of Reprobationism by some) is the prevalence of Supersessionism, a view also known as Replacement (or Fulfillment) Theology. There are many shades of Supersessionism, with some being more extreme than others. However, they all share the same core tenet—namely, that when the leaders of Israel (the Sanhedrin) rejected Yeshua of Nazareth as the Messiah in AD 30,<sup>12</sup> God in turn rejected the unbelieving nation and replaced her with the Christian Church.<sup>13</sup> In this way, they say, the Church has become the “New Israel.”

New Calvinists are all over the board when it comes to this critical issue. Some of our TGC friends, particularly those from the more conservative ranks of the Southern Baptist Convention, are strongly opposed to Replacement Theology. They are non-supersessionist (in the tradition of the much-revered W.A. Criswell<sup>14</sup>) and strongly affirm the ongoing role of the nation Israel and the Jewish people in God’s still-unfolding plan of the ages.



Other prominent New Calvinists, however, see things differently, including some Baptists. John Piper, for example, was a co-founder of TGC and is a member of its leadership council. Besides his former pastorate at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis (from which he retired in 2012), Piper is best known for his popular and far-reaching *Desiring God* ministry. With respect to eschatology, he self-identifies as a post-Tribulational premillennialist. For purposes of soteriology,<sup>15</sup> he’s solidly in the Reformed tradition.

## PIPER’S SEVEN MIDEAST PRINCIPLES

1. God chose Israel from all the peoples of the world to be His own possession.
2. The Land was part of the inheritance He promised to Abraham and his descendants forever.
3. The promises made to Abraham, including the promise of the Land, will be inherited as an everlasting gift only by true, spiritual Israel, not disobedient, unbelieving Israel.
4. Jesus Christ has come into the world as the Jewish Messiah, and His own people rejected Him and broke covenant with their God.
5. Therefore, the secular state of Israel today may not claim a present divine right to the Land, but they and we should seek a peaceful settlement not based on present divine rights, but on international principles of justice, mercy, and practical feasibility.
6. By faith in Jesus Christ, the Jewish Messiah, Gentiles become heirs of the promise of Abraham, including the promise of the Land.
7. Finally, this inheritance of Christ’s people will happen at the Second Coming of Christ to establish His kingdom, not before; and till then, we Christians must not take up arms to claim our inheritance; but rather lay down our lives to share our inheritance with as many as we can.

## PIPER ON ISRAEL AND THE MIDDLE EAST

In the July 25, 2014, edition of TGC's U.S. Edition blog ([thegospelcoalition.org](http://thegospelcoalition.org)), Matt Smethurst summarized Pastor Piper's "Seven Mideast Principles" (see inset).

We provided a point-by-point response to these seven principles in the July–August 2014 issue of *Messianic Perspectives*, so we won't go into all of those details again here.<sup>16</sup>



As we said in 2014, we agree wholeheartedly with Brother Piper's first two points; but then it's downhill from there. Here's a summary of the more significant problems we see with Piper's position.

### 1. Failure to distinguish between ownership and possession

Contrary to Piper's claim, the **inheritance** of the Land by Abraham and his descendants was not dependent on Israel's faithfulness or obedience. If that were the case, Israel would have been disinherited many times during the Old Testament era! What was contingent on Israel's obedience was not her **ownership**, but her **possession** of the Land.<sup>17</sup> Israel has been expelled from her Land several times due to her various sins—but **she still owns it**. The covenant the ancient Israelites broke (Jer. 31:32; cp. Ex. 24:1–18) was the **conditional** Sinai Covenant, not the **unconditional** Abrahamic Covenant which forms the legal basis for Israel's ownership of the Land (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:5–21; 17:4–8; 18:18–19; 22:17–18).

### 2. Assuming that Israel possessed the Land because of her merits

It's a common misconception that Israel is only entitled to possess her Land when she is in good standing with God. We would respectfully remind Brother Piper and other anti-Zionists that **Israel never dwelt in her Land because she deserved it**. The LORD made this clear before the ancient Israelites ever set foot in Canaan:

"Do not think in your heart, after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land'; but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out from before you.

**"It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.**

"Therefore understand that **the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people**" (Deut. 9:4–6, emphasis added).

### 3. Failure to distinguish between disinheritance and discipline

Surprisingly, Brother Piper seems not to understand the difference between **disinheritance** (which is permanent) and **discipline** (which is only for a time). The Abrahamic Covenant and the Sinai (Mosaic) Covenant are distinct in that the former is grace-based (i.e., no human conditions) and the latter is performance-based (many conditions specified in the Torah). God doesn't stop loving His people (or disinherit them) simply because they (we) misbehave. He may "ground" us (that is, He may revoke some of our privileges for a time), or He may otherwise discipline us, like an earthly parent does (Heb. 12:3–11); but we're still His kids and He loves us! The same principle applies to Israel. Their national relationship to God is secured by the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant—and that has never changed.<sup>18</sup>



### 4. Not recognizing that Israel is destined to be "grafted in" again

Pastor Piper's most persuasive point—at least on the surface—may be his claim that Israel "broke covenant with [her] God" and rejected His Messiah, so He replaced her with the new, spiritual Israel, or the Church. The Church has now "become heirs of the promise of Abraham," Piper and other supersessionists say. It sounds perfectly reasonable, and most Reformed people certainly agree. To them, Israel rejected the Messiah—so God rejected her, tit for tat. End of story.

Thank God, however, the story doesn't end there—and we should be grateful that it doesn't. In the Book of Romans, the Apostle Paul walks us through a narrative with a markedly different ending. First, he acknowledges that unbelieving Israel has been "broken off" (that is, set aside for a time by God) while the Roman/Gentile Yeshua-followers "stand by faith" (11:19–20). Then he issues a stern word of warning to the Yeshua-followers: *For if God did not spare the natural branches* [that is, the natural descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob], *He may not spare you* [that is, the ingrafted Gentiles], *either* (v. 21). In other words, we believers had better not become haughty and think we're superior to unbelieving Jews—because if we ever fall short, we too might be "cut off" (i.e., set aside or excluded; v. 22), like Israel has been.<sup>19</sup>

Then Paul explains that Israel's setting aside (that is, when she rejected the Messiah in the first century) was **temporary**: *And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again* (v. 23). There it is—the Apostle refers to Israel's being grafted “in again”! Note, however, that there's a caveat here: Before she is grafted back in, the nation must not be “in unbelief.” So, Paul prophetically declares that someday, “all Israel” will believe and be saved. **She will not continue in unbelief!** Verse 26 tells us, *And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”* And once that happens, and the nation Israel is populated by Yeshua-followers, she will be grafted in again!

### 5. Spiritualizing “Israel” but insisting on literal land

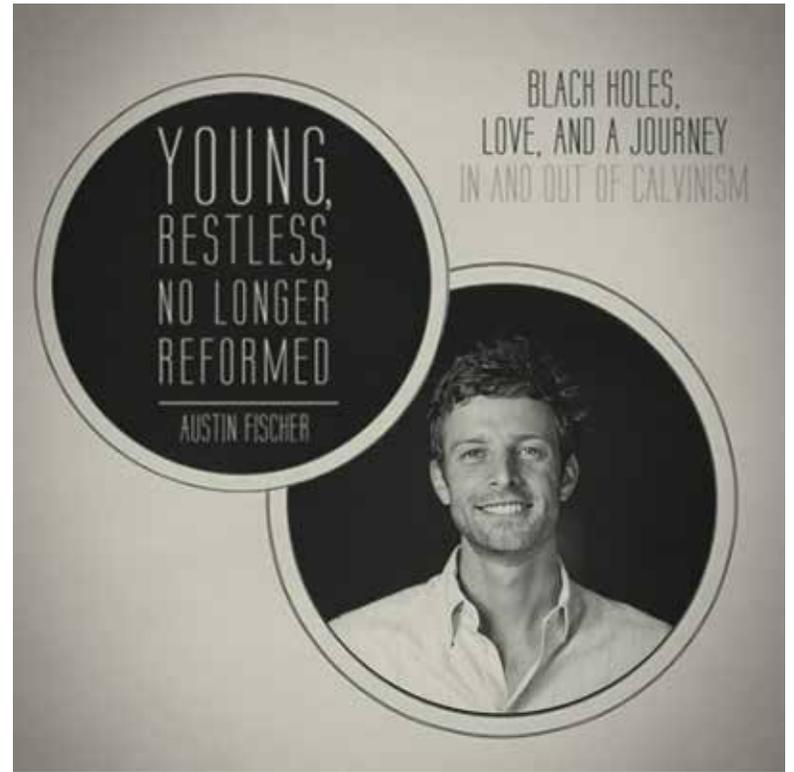
Pastor Piper wants to **spiritualize** the term “Israel” and make it refer to the Church; but at the same time, he wants to take the Land promise **literally**. Wouldn't it be more consistent to say that the **literal inheritance** belongs to the **literal inheritors**? Oddly enough, Piper declares that the ancient Land of Israel ultimately belongs to Christians (who, as “the true, spiritual Israel,” have inherited the Abrahamic promises); however, he concedes that Christians can't take possession of their Land inheritance until the Second Coming.



This reckless claim about there being no true title deed **right now** is a formula for disaster. If what Piper says is true, then the Land of Israel today is up for grabs because the ancient assignment of ownership to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is no longer in effect. Such a view invites chaos in the Middle East, since (according to Piper) the true owners are the Christians. So, maybe we Christians should charge the current occupants rent! (Just kidding, of course!)

No wonder Brother Piper explicitly warns against the folly of “taking up arms to claim our inheritance” (his seventh Mideast Principle). Reading through those seven principles, that warning at the end about not “taking up arms” seems out of place—and even a bit bizarre—until you consider the context. He's warning Christian zealots not to organize themselves into a Crusade, of sorts, and try to march into the Middle East and take “their” Land by force!<sup>20</sup>

Since John Piper is a respected leader and influencer in TGC circles, it's unlikely that he's the only New Calvinist who harbors such misconceptions about the current status of Israel and the Jewish people. Thank God, however, there are others in TGC who are strongly pro-Israel and don't agree with him.



### IS CALVINISM BEAUTIFUL?

John Piper's influence in TGC has been far-reaching. Austin Fischer, teaching pastor at Vista Community Church in Temple, Texas, spent several years in the New Calvinist movement. He was fascinated by something Piper had said: “They're not going to embrace your theology unless it makes their hearts sing.” Austin was intrigued by the notion that a system of theology could be so beautiful, it could make your heart sing. Here's his testimony:

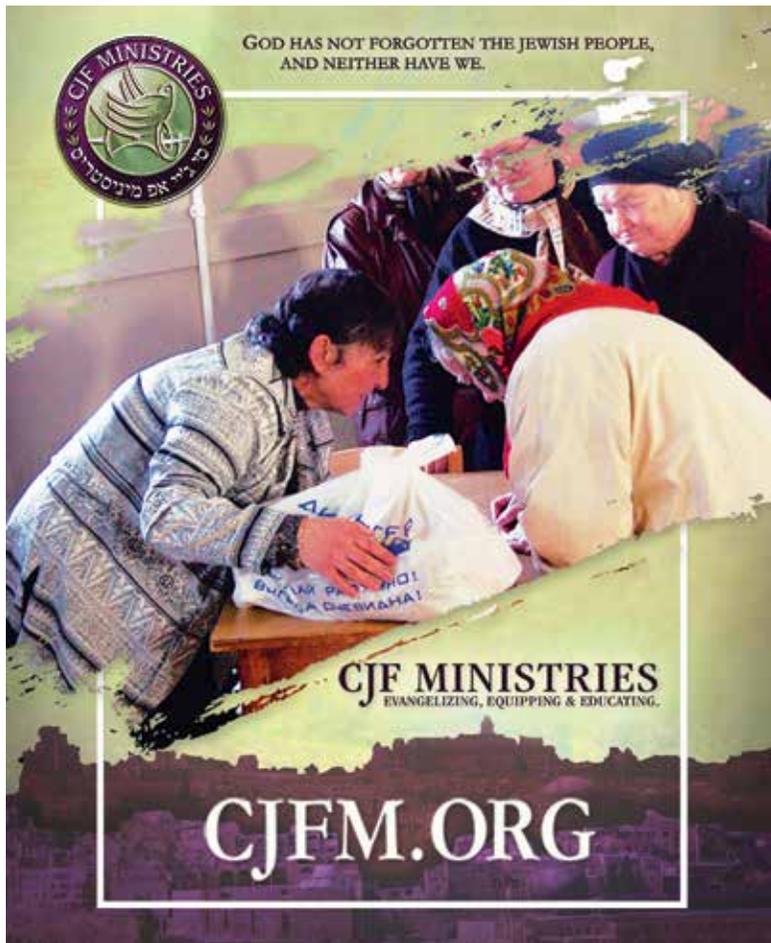
I embraced Calvinism, not just because I found its exegesis and inner logic compelling, but because it made my heart sing. It was true, but also (and perhaps more importantly) good and beautiful . . .

John Piper understands this better than most, and his brilliant attention to the aesthetics of Calvinism (channeling Jonathan Edwards) is one of the (if not the) primary reasons for the tremendous surge of Calvinism among young evangelicals. Simply put, plenty of people have argued Calvinism is true. Piper's particular genius has been in arguing that Calvinism is also beautiful. **Many young evangelicals have been convinced and their hearts sing for Calvinism.**

My exodus from Calvinism was set in motion when I came to believe Calvinism was not beautiful—indeed, when I realized that Calvinism (consistent Calvinism at least) was, at best, cold and brutally enigmatic (which is, perhaps, why many cannot be consistent Calvinists).<sup>21</sup>

For many people, a “consistent” Calvinist is someone who subscribes to all five TULIP points, even to the point of embracing Reprobation. And that's the ugly underbelly of consistent Calvinism that many New Calvinists don't want to talk about—Reprobation. When this brother realized he couldn't toe the party line anymore, he left the movement.

Other disillusioned folks, like Jakub Ferencik, have done more than merely leave the Calvinist fold. They've left the Christian faith altogether, concluding that if five-point Calvinism's barbaric characterization of God is accurate, they want no part of it.<sup>22</sup>



## REACHING OUT TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Sometimes people ask us what any of this has to do with Jewish outreach. Our founder, Charles Halff, a Jewish believer, had an answer to that question. He said it has **everything** to do with it. **If there's anyone to whom we should not be misrepresenting the character, nature, and plan of God, it's His earthly people, the Jews.** That was Charles' response. He always said that his Jewish kinsmen are pretty good at sniffing out malarkey—and that's exactly what aberrations like Reprobationism and extreme Supersessionism are.

We cringe to think that some Jewish people over the past two millennia may have rejected the Gospel because they objected to the portrayal of God as a cruel Deity who created some people for no other purpose than to doom them to Hell. This is the kind of religious nonsense that makes it easier for a Jewish person to say, "No thanks. You can keep your Jesus. I'll take my chances with the Fathers of my people—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." 



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<sup>1</sup> The funds the man collected were then turned over to a 24-year-old German noble named Albert of Hohenzollern, who was raising money to buy for himself the title of Archbishop of Mainz. Albert kept half of the proceeds from indulgences and sent the other half to Pope Leo X, who was intent on remodeling the aging St. Peter's Church at the Vatican.

<sup>2</sup> In Reformation days, Catholic masses were uniformly conducted in Latin and congregants followed along, as best they could, in a language many of them could not understand. The Bible itself was in Latin, too. In the early 1500s, Luther translated the Scriptures into High German, and Wycliffe and Tyndale began their translation work into English, making God's Word available to the masses for the first time since ancient times.

<sup>3</sup> It was common in those days for the big, heavy wooden door of a local church, especially in a university community, to serve as a sort of "bulletin board" for the posting of important announcements.

<sup>4</sup> When Luther refused to recant his anti-indulgence "heresy," the pope excommunicated him on January 3, 1521.

<sup>5</sup> We say Spurgeon was a "moderate" Calvinist because he rejected the errors and excesses of Hyper-Calvinism (e.g., the teaching of Reprobationism). For much of his ministry, the "hypers" were a burr under Spurgeon's saddle. See Iain Murray's book *Spurgeon vs. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching* (London: Banner of Truth, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Many people don't know that Calvin himself didn't come up with the TULIP formula. It was composed many years after his death when Calvinists and Arminians in Europe found themselves at odds. The two sides finally came together at the Synod of Dort (1618–1619) for a conclave—and the Calvinists won the day. Each of the five Calvinist TULIP points answers one of the Arminian Articles of Remonstrance.

<sup>7</sup> Colin Hansen, *The Young, Restless, Reformed: A Journalist's Journey with the New Calvinists* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Neo-Calvinism was an offshoot of Dutch Calvinism that emphasized the "cultural mandate" (that is, the responsibility of Christians to wield their godly influence in every realm of society). Neo-Calvinism is most often associated with Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), an influential politician-theologian who served as Prime Minister of the Netherlands from 1901 to 1905. It still has adherents today.

<sup>9</sup> This article in *Time* magazine was written by Barbara Kiviat and retrieved from content.time.com in December 2019.

<sup>10</sup> "Who are the New Calvinists and what are the beliefs of New Calvinism?" by Michael Houdmann, accessed in November 2019 on the "Got Questions?" website (gotquestions.org).

<sup>11</sup> Some Calvinists see five-point Calvinism as the true, centrist position, with aberrations like Arminianism and Hyper-Calvinism tugging from the extremes. For instance, one Calvinist blogger asserts: "In one sense, Hyper-Calvinism, like Arminianism, is a rationalistic perversion of true Calvinism. Whereas Arminianism destroys the

sovereignty of God, Hyper-Calvinism destroys the responsibility of man" (Tom Ascol, "A Brief Clarification of Calvinism, Arminianism, and Hyper-Calvinism" at the *Founders Ministries* blogsite [founders.org], n.d.).

<sup>12</sup> A recounting of the highlights of Yeshua's rigged "trial" before the first-century Sanhedrin (the governing body of the Jewish nation during the Roman occupation) is provided in Matthew 26:57–68. The date AD 30 is an estimate.

<sup>13</sup> For an excellent analysis of Supersessionism (and its numerous variants), see *Future Israel* by Barry Horner (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> W.A. Criswell, PhD, pastored the large and influential First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, for half a century and twice served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Dr. Criswell was an ardent defender of futurism and Israel's ongoing role in God's end-time plan. Audio of thousands of his messages is cataloged in the Sermon Library at wacriswell.com.

<sup>15</sup> **Eschatology** is "the study of last things," or end-time prophecy. **Soteriology** is "the study of salvation"; that is, how we are saved and adopted into God's family.

<sup>16</sup> Our *Messianic Perspectives* print archive is available at cjfm.org under "Resources."

<sup>17</sup> Even today, real estate law makes a distinction between the ownership and possession of property. You can **own** a piece of real estate without actually **possessing** (or living on) it (and vice versa).

<sup>18</sup> We're talking here about *Am Yisra'el* and her **national** relationship with God, of course. No individual is saved (spiritually) simply by being Jewish (or by possessing any particular brand of human DNA). Regarding how we become rightly related to God as individuals, the Apostle Paul says there is "no difference" between Jew and Gentile (Rom. 3:22). We all approach the Lord the same way—that is, upon the basis of our faith in Messiah Yeshua and His salvific work on Calvary.

<sup>19</sup> Incidentally, this doesn't mean that believers can lose their salvation. In fact, that's Paul's point: Israel can no more lose her relationship with God than the Church can. Both relationships are grounded in the grace-based Abrahamic Covenant, which is conditioned only on faith—and nothing else. When we fail the Lord, we are **disciplined**, not **disinherited**. Discipline, in fact, is a sign of sonship (Heb. 12:7–8). He doesn't discipline anyone else's kids!

<sup>20</sup> The bloody and barbaric "Christian" Crusades in medieval times (1096–1291) were carried out by religious armies whose sponsors in the Vatican and elsewhere shared the view that the Jewish people have been set aside and Christians are now the true inheritors of the Holy Land. Forgiveness of sins was one of the enticements used to get Catholic men to leave their homes and families and march under the Crusader cross to "defend" the Holy Land.

<sup>21</sup> Austin Fischer, *Young, Restless, No Longer Reformed: Black Holes, Love, and a Journey In and Out of Calvinism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014). Emphasis in bold is ours.

<sup>22</sup> Jakub Ferencik, "Calvinism is True and Christianity is Flawed" (Nov. 20, 2017), accessed in August 2020 on his blog at medium.com.

# Fruit from the Harvest

by Violette Berger



## God's Perfect Timing Again

**Richard Hill, CJFM representative and pastor of Beth Yeshua Messianic Congregation (Las Vegas),** was blessed recently with answered prayer within his own family. His 90-year-old father has been reticent in accepting Jesus whenever Rich shared the Gospel with him over the years. However, recently his father suffered many critical medical challenges which placed him in hospice with probably less than one to two weeks to live. With urgency in his heart, Rich prayed that God would touch his dad's heart and open the door for repentance when he called him. Since he also had some dementia, Rich explained to him why he was in the hospital. He responded, "Well, that's a death warrant!" When Rich told him what his fate would be without Jesus, his father said, "I know." Once again, Rich shared the Gospel with him, and was amazed when his father began repeating the salvation prayer. Following their prayer, his father said, "I hope to see you soon in the afterlife." He also told Rich that he had peace. Then he said goodbye and hung up. Rich writes that his father had peace, and no pain, with the Lord here on earth for 12 days before the Lord called him to his eternal peace.

**CJFM representative Yossi Ovadia, pastor of Kehilat Haderech Messianic Congregation (Israel),** writes about a couple in his congregation who came to Israel from Russia to receive life-saving treatment for their grandson who was diagnosed with a fast-spreading cancer in his eye. Praise God that the treatments worked, and the boy was healed. While at the hospital during treatments, the grandmother met the parents of a girl who also had a growth in her eye and had come to Israel for treatments. The grandmother and another couple from the congregation shared the Gospel with the parents. The young girl's treatments were also successful and she was healed. By God's grace, her parents became believers, and Pastor Yossi had the privilege of baptizing them in the Jordan River. He said, "The family came to Israel looking for healing and found salvation. Hallelujah!" Despite the restrictions and difficulty in holding services, baptisms of new believers and older members of the congregation abound. During the last five baptisms at the Jordan River, religious Jews watched the baptisms curiously and some interesting conversations ensued. Pastor Yossi adds, "What a blessing and what a testament of God's faithfulness in these complicated times!"

## Campus Outreach

**CJFM representative Eric Chabot (Columbus, OH)** leads an apologetics ministry on the campuses of Ohio State University and Columbus State University and, since the schools reopened, writes, "We had an amazing September on the Ohio State University campus, evangelistically speaking. It is the best school term we have ever had. We spoke with 165 students and were blessed to lead 12 individuals (from different backgrounds) to faith, in addition to the four students from the previous month. It has been evident to me and others that perhaps the state of our nation has created a void. People are looking for answers, Jew and Gentile alike." Eric's weekly Zoom meetings are also going great, with excellent participation and with guest speakers such as Dr. Michael Brown, Dr. Darrell Bock, Dr. Robert Bowman, and others.

## Pandemic Feasts

**Violette Berger, CJFM representative and staff writer (Scottsdale, AZ),** shares blessings in the midst of the pandemic: "I praise God that our Messianic fellowship, *Tikvah BaMidbar*, was able to resume our in-person services (following CDC guidelines) for observation of the Fall Feasts of Israel: Rosh HaShanah (Feast of Trumpets), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), and Succoth (Feast of Tabernacles). Although the number of attendees has been small during these challenging times, nevertheless, God draws individual souls. One of our Messianic Jewish members invited his unsaved Jewish neighbor to our Succoth service. Afterward, she said that our description and reverence for God and our worshipful service is exactly what she is looking for. Please pray that Yeshua's grace would abound in her heart."

**Diann Parkas, CJFM representative (New Jersey),** has been celebrating the Fall Jewish Feasts of Israel mostly outdoors and in small groups due to the pandemic. She adds, "This opened the way to a pretty unique opportunity." Diann became friends, prior to the pandemic, with an unsaved Jewish woman who attended a Purim event that she hosted. The woman later joined Diann's Messianic Passover Seder on Zoom, and even joined a five-week Zoom Bible study Diann taught. On Rosh HaShanah (the Feast of Trumpets) this same woman invited Diann to join her and her friends as they streamed her temple's holiday service on her deck. Diann praises God that in this context she was able to share her faith with five unsaved Jewish individuals. Please pray that the seeds planted would come to fruition.

# Bible Questions & Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

Have a Bible question?

Submit it to Dr. Hedrick at [garyh@cjfm.org](mailto:garyh@cjfm.org), or mail it to 611 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78215.

You may see your question addressed in a future issue of *Messianic Perspectives*.

**QUESTION:** You quote the verse that says God “is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). But aren’t you failing to differentiate between God’s providential will and His moral will? Morally, He wants everyone to be saved; providentially, however, He has already chosen the few who will be.

**ANSWER:** Yes, some of our Calvinist friends differentiate between terms like moral will and providential will. Distinctions like this can sometimes be helpful; but not always. At times, it can be like saying there are two kinds of gravity—moral gravity, which means that some objects might float upward when we let go of them, and providential gravity, which dictates that anything in free-fall must drop to the ground. In those cases, it’s nonsensical. Gravity is gravity, and God’s will is God’s will. It’s what He wants to happen.

Yes, there is such a thing as the Lord’s **determinative** will where He not only **wants** something to happen, but He also **causes** that thing to happen. (Calvinist theologians call this a divine “decree,” based on His sovereignty.) Here’s one of my favorite passages where God expresses His determinative will: *Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen* (Jude 24–25).

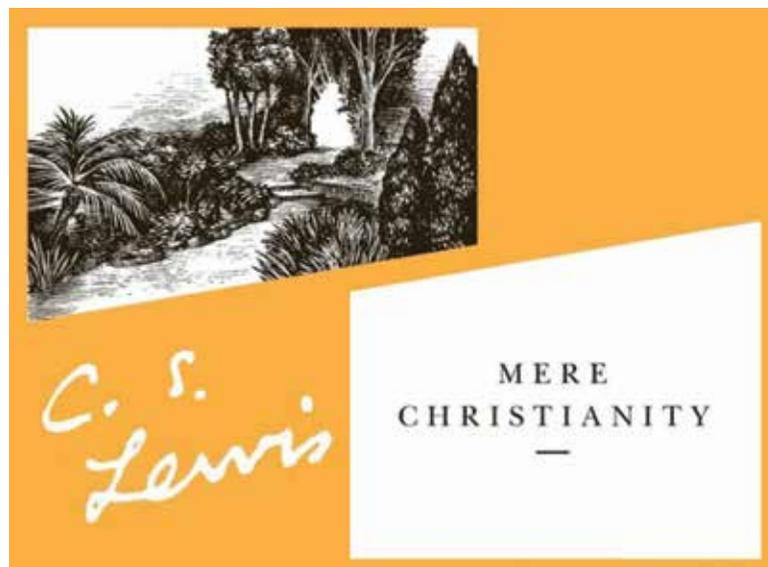
Isn’t it a blessing to know that our LORD God, Creator of the universe, has determined that we, His Elect people, will be presented “faultless” in His Presence “with exceeding joy” on that glorious Day? It’s a decree by “Him who is able,” so no power in Heaven or on earth can prevent it from happening! That’s what Jude says!

However, there are other things that God would **like** to happen, but someone must **do** something first. For example, it’s the desire of God’s heart for everyone to repent and come to Him. That’s what the Apostle Paul told Timothy: *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Tim. 2:3–4). It’s God’s desire, but we know this isn’t His determinative will because not everyone will believe in Him. Some will exercise their freedom negatively, like Lucifer and the fallen angels did in the primordial past (Isa. 14:12–15; Luke 10:18).

You see, it boils down to this: The Lord won’t force Himself on anyone who doesn’t want a relationship with Him (Matt. 23:37–39). He won’t coerce anyone into loving Him because He knows that true love must be voluntary (Deut. 6:5). Here’s how C.S. Lewis explained it:

God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go wrong or right. Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free but had no possibility of going wrong, but I can’t. If a thing is free to be good, it’s also free to be bad. And free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then, did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata—of creatures that worked like machines—would hardly be worth creating. . . .

Of course, God knew what would happen if they used their freedom the wrong way: apparently, He thought it worth the risk. . . . If God thinks this state of war in the universe a price worth paying for free will—that is, for making a real world in which creatures can do real good or harm and something of real importance can happen, instead of a toy world which only moves when He pulls the strings—then we may take it [that] it is [a price] worth paying.



<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1980), 47–48.

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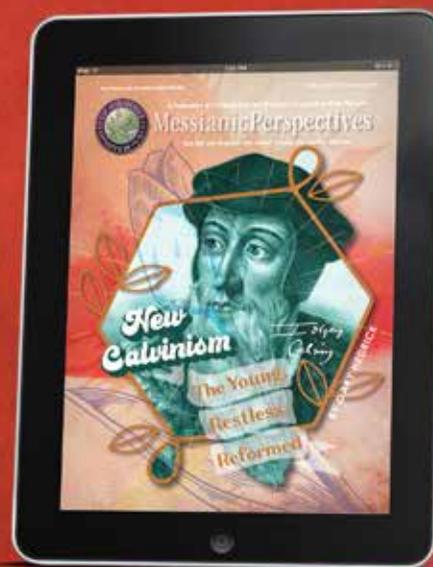
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