

Comparison of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with Calvinist About the Sabbath, Food, Worship, and Predestination

Donald Loffie Muntu,
Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Theologia Surya Nusantara
donald.muntu@suryanusantara.ac.id

Tuppal Agus Saputra Situmorang
Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Theologia Surya Nusantara

Abstract

This study intends to examine the differences of the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA church) with Calvinism traditions about Sabbath, food, worship, predestination. This study concluded that SDA church's understanding or view with the Calvinism regarding the fundamental beliefs about the Sabbath concluded that the SDA church's understanding is more biblical than the Calvinist tradition. SDA church belief on food is more biblical and the practice is in accordance with the Bible compared to the Calvinism. SDA church' understanding or views and practices in worship with the Calvinism are almost practically the same in their procedures. SDA church's understanding or view with the Calvinism regarding predestination differ in view, SDA church is the most in accordance with the Bible. SDA church has their beliefs and practices as well according to the Bible, while the Calvinism has an understanding or belief in accordance with the interpretation of church reformers such as John Calvin and other general church. This study suggests to both denominations regarding Sabbath, food, worship, and predestination to harmonize understanding based on the Bible so as not to increase or reduce the true understanding while there are similarities in implementing their worship. The Seventh-day Adventist church has biblical beliefs and their practices according to the Bible, while the Calvinist tradition has an understanding according to the interpretation of church reformers such as John Calvin and also the general church.

Keywords: *Comparative Beliefs, Calvinism, Sabbath, Food, Worship and Predestination*

Introduction

Theologically, most denominations of the Christian church themselves emphasize that the Bible is entirely trustworthy and the basic standard of the church itself, although there are also churches that conduct worship and the basis of belief is different from what the Bible says. Because it does it with its own interpretation or following what has been done and taught by the leader. The Calvinist sect within the world's Protestant churches is often called Reformed or Presbyterian and is almost as old as Lutheran. Regarding his theological insight, the teaching and practice of his churches has five Calvinist points: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints (TULIP):

1. Total Depravity. This doctrine states that man is cursed from birth due to original sin and has no ability to save himself from sin. Man does not have the ability to seek God or do good on his own, but needs God's help to be saved.

2. Unconditional Election: This doctrine states that God chose and predestined people to be saved before the world was created. This election was not due to human goodness or success, but was purely based on the will and grace of God.
3. Limited Atonement. This doctrine states that Christ's death was only to save those whom God had chosen to save. Christ's atonement is not general, but limited to God's chosen people.
4. Irresistible Grace. This doctrine states that God's grace cannot be rejected by those who have been chosen to be saved. The chosen one will always receive God's grace and be saved by Him.
5. Perseverance of the Saints. This doctrine states that those who have been chosen by God to be saved will not lose their salvation. They will continue to believe and live in trust until they finally arrive in heaven.¹

The teaching of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA Church) teaches about biblical authority and salvation derived through faith in Jesus Christ, and expresses church teaching through 28 fundamental biblical doctrine descriptions. SDA Church most prominent teachings include belief in the eternity of the ten commandments, the heavenly temple, and the judgment day beginning in 1844, and the most prominent doctrinal survey is about the Sabbath (seventh day, day of rest).

Method

This study utilized the descriptive method through literature study. This study will specifically discuss topics regarding sabbath, food, worship, and predestination.

Discussion

The views of the Calvinist church or called the Reformed church on some fundamental teachings of beliefs about sabbath, food, worship, and predestination are explained in this study.

John Calvin's View of the Sabbath

The concept of the Sabbath in the Old Testament. The question that often arises about the timing of the Sabbath is whether the church should require God's people to worship on a particular day or is the congregation free to make their own choice of Sabbath. Genesis 2:2-3 does not specify a specific day for the Sabbath, but emphasizes the principle of "*one day in seven principles*." Two possible interpretations arise², namely "*every seventh day*" as the seventh day or the second possibility, "*every seventh day*" as one day of the week with no specific day assigned. Calvin is difficult to interpret whether the number seven refers to a Sabbath eternity or Sabbath imperfection, or both possibilities that can be taken³. Which is the real alternative Calvin choosing? Although Calvin emphasized the seriousness of the Sabbath commandment as written in the Bible, God gave a harsh rebuke of the death penalty for Sabbath violators. The general Calvinist theologian's view of the Sabbath is that Saturday is considered part of God's continuing law, although it is interpreted more flexibly than Old Testament teaching. They see Sunday, also known as the Lord's Day, as more relevant to

¹ Theopedia: An Encyclopedia of Biblical Christianity; <https://www.theopedia.com/total> depravity. Accessed 21 January 2024.

² Parker, T.H.L. Calvin: *An Introduction to His Thought* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1995).

³ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Baker Book House, 1981)

Christians as it relates to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Sabbath in Calvinist theology is seen in the context of law moral Allah which is valid but interpreted in full fulfillment through Jesus Christ.

Therefore, Sabbath observance is regarded as an expression of love and reverence for God, not as a formal obligation or ritual. However, this view may vary among Calvinist churches, some may apply a stricter view of the Sabbath, while others see it as a moral principle that remains valid with a more flexible interpretation of daily life⁴. Therefore, understanding the variations in Calvinist theologians' views on the Sabbath requires examining the theological and teaching sources of a particular Calvinist theologian or church. They see Sunday, also known as the Lord's Day, as more relevant to Christians as it relates to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

They believe that the original Sabbath was the Saturday established in the Old Testament as a day for Jews to rest from work and commemorate God's creation of the world. They consider Sunday, also known as the Lord's Day, more relevant to Christians because it is related to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But they consider the Sabbath to be a principle to be respected: we should take time to rest and focus on worshiping God. In the Calvinist view, Sunday is seen as the "Lord's day" or "resurrection day" because it relates to the significance of Jesus' resurrection as the basis of the Christian faith.⁵

Calvin Church Theologian's View of Food

Calvinist theologians understand the difference between unclean and clean food as described in other religious traditions but do not emphasize it much in their theology because of their view that food cannot contaminate a person spiritually or make a person closer or distant from God. But their theologians also teach ethical responsibility in eating food. They emphasize the importance of body health and avoid foods that can damage health or have a bad impact on the body. ⁶John Calvin did not write much specifically about food in his writings, but there are important views that can be taken from Calvin's point of view regarding food based on his theological principles:

1. Calvin argued that food is a gift of God that should be cherished and thanked, not only as a fulfillment of man's physical needs but also as a sign of God's goodness and His grace to man.
2. Calvin emphasized the importance of moderation and balance in eating. He argued that man should respect his body and not damage it by overeating or consuming unhealthy foods because the body is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit and must be properly taken care of.
3. Calvin also emphasized that food should not be used as an end goal in life. Man must not be attached to physical needs and should focus his attention on important things such as offering his life to God.⁷

Overall, Calvin's view of food emphasizes the importance of appreciating God's gift in the form of food, maintaining a healthy body, and not allowing food to be the main goal in life.⁸

⁴ Anthony N.S. Lane., *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011),123

⁵ John Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), 213

⁶ John Calvin ., *Commentary on Leviticus* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), 231

⁷ *Ibid*, p.234

⁸ John Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 106

1. Charles Hodge – 19th-century Presbyterian theologian who taught the law of food in Leviticus 11 was part of the law God gave to the Israelites as a sign of the covenant between God and His people.
2. Wayne Grudem – Contemporary evangelical theologian who teaches that the law of food in Leviticus 11 has symbolic and practical meaning. This law provided guidance for the Israelites in choosing safe and healthy foods.
3. John Piper – famous pastor and author, teaches that the law of food in Leviticus 11 teaches that God cares about the details of our lives. In choosing good and healthy foods, and avoiding foods that can damage our health, we can honor God.

However, it should be noted that all Calvinists do not hold this view and it is not the official teaching of the Calvinist school as a whole because it is still considered controversial and still debated in Christian and scientific circles. But also keep in mind that each church has slightly different interpretations and practices in this regard⁹. Calvinist churches tend to adhere to the views emphasized in the Bible regarding unclean and halal food, including eating pork.¹⁰

Calvinist Theologians' Views on Worship

Calvinist theologians have a distinctive view of worship. Some important views of Calvinist theologians on worship include:

1. Worship should be based on Scripture – Theologians believe that worship is conducted according to the principles laid down in the Bible and must not contradict the teachings contained therein.
2. Worship should be directed towards the glory of God – Everything done in worship should be centered on God and not on oneself, worship should encourage people to know God and respond to His love.
3. Worship should be simple and meaningful – Worship does not need to be excessive or extravagant to honor God, but it must be done earnestly and meaningfully.
4. Worship should emphasize doctrinal teaching – Worship should include deep and detailed Bible teaching on the teachings of Christian beliefs.
5. Worship should strengthen fellowship – Worship should strengthen fellowship between believers, strengthen their relationship with God, and strengthen each other in faith so that congregations can more strongly and effectively serve God and others.

Calvinist Theologians' View of Predestination

Theodore Beza, John Calvin's successor in the Swiss Reformation movement, shared Calvin's views on predestination. According to Beza, predestination is God's act before creation, choosing some to be saved and others not to be saved. He saw predestination as a manifestation of God's grace, and only through that grace can one be saved. Beza also taught the "*perseverance of the saints*," the belief that those chosen by God will remain saved to the end, through challenges and temptations, because of His grace that sustains them. Beza still valued people's freedom to choose, but considered that people's fate did not depend on their will, but on God's decision to be clear and working in all things to accomplish His plan.¹¹

Jonathan Edwards, a famous 18th-century theologian and preacher in the United States, emphasized predestination as a central and important doctrine in Christianity. For him,

⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion III.19.15*

¹⁰ <https://www.learnreligions.com/is-eating-pork-a-sin-in-christianity-363301>, Accessed January 24, 2024.

¹¹ Theodore Beza. *Summa Totius Christianismi* (Tomus II. Liber VII, Caput XII)

predestination is God's act that determines a person's fate before the world is created, where only those chosen by God will be saved. Although Edwards' view of predestination is harsh, he highlights that God's grace is the foundation of salvation, available to all who diligently seek it. Edwards also taught the concept of "spiritual awakening," an intense spiritual experience that he considered a sign chosen by God to be saved. He affirmed that salvation cannot be obtained through human goodness or virtue, but only through the acceptance of grace and faith in Jesus Christ.¹²

Louis Berkhof, a 20th-century Dutch Reformed theologian influential in the Calvinist theological tradition, considered predestination a crucial doctrine in Calvinist theology, to be understood in the context of the concept of salvation as a whole. For him, predestination is God's sovereign act, limited to His own choice, in which God chooses people to be saved without depending on human will. Berkhof states that predestination does not override human will; rather, it is an act of God related to the will of man.

The concept of "*perseverance of the saints*" taught by Berkhof states that those chosen by God will endure to the end, will not lose salvation, and that salvation is an inalienable gift to those whom He chooses. Although his views are similar to Calvin and Beza's, Berkhof stresses that predestination is not fatalistic or ignores the role of human beings. For him, predestination is an act of God working in tandem with human will, in which man's freedom to choose is not completely ignored.¹³ Berkhof's overall view of predestination became integral to Calvinist theology, expanding Calvin and Beza's understanding of the concept.

Charles Hodge, an American Presbyterian theologian in the 19th century, is known as one of the most influential theologians in the Calvinist tradition. For him, predestination is a crucial doctrine in Calvinist theology, to be understood in the context of the concept of salvation as a whole. Hodge states that predestination is an act of God that is sovereign and limited to His own choice, whereby God chooses people to be saved without depending on human will.

Although Hodge asserts that salvation comes entirely from God and man cannot obtain it through his own efforts, he stresses that predestination should not be understood as God's decision that ignores human will. For him, God chooses people to be saved based on "faith given by Him," so man's will to accept faith is also taken into account in His decisions.

Hodge also taught the concept of "*perseverance of the saints*," the belief that those chosen by God will endure to the end and will not lose their salvation. Salvation is seen as a gift given by God to His chosen ones, which cannot be lost despite doubts or mistakes.¹⁴ Hodge's view of predestination is similar to Calvin and Beza's, emphasizing that predestination should not be fatalistically understood or ignore the human role in accepting faith. For him, predestination is an act of God working in relation to human will, and man's freedom to choose is not completely ignored.

This study concluded the difference between the Seventh-day Adventists and the Calvinist sect of the Sabbath is in the interpretation and practice of the Sabbath. The Seventh-day Adventist Church celebrates the Sabbath every Saturday as a holy day, honors God as creator of the universe, and includes the commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

¹² Jonathan Edward. *God's Sovereignty in the Salvation of Men*. Volume 2. Sermon 10. South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014.

¹³ Louis Berkhof. *The History of Christian Doctrines*. Chapter 14.

¹⁴ Charles Hodges. *Systematic Theology*. Volume II, Chapter VII.

Calvinists, meanwhile, revere the Sabbath as a holy day, but celebrate it on Sunday, which they call "the Lord's day" or "resurrection day." Calvinists believe that observing the Sabbath on Sunday comes from centuries of church tradition and is not expressly prescribed in the Bible. The core difference lies in the Sabbath-observing days: Saturday for Adventists and Sunday for Calvinists.

The differences between SDA Church and the Calvinist school regarding food are:

1. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a specific view of food, believing it to be an integral part of spiritual and physical health, with specific guidelines on the types of food best consumed and avoided. Calvinists, on the other hand, tend not to have a specific view on food.
2. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a particular view on unclean and clean food, believing that foods such as pork are unhealthy and adversely affect health. Adventists believe that God gives specific guidelines in the Bible about the kind of food His people should consume. In contrast, Calvinists do not pay special attention to the unclean or clean status of food, assuming that people are free to choose the type of food they want to consume.

It is important to remember that these views can vary between individuals and denominations within the Seventh-day Adventist Church and Calvinist sects, and do not always reflect the entire community.

There are several fundamental differences between the Seventh-day Adventist and Calvinist views on worship, including:

1. Day of worship: SDA church views Saturday (the seventh day) as a day of worship appointed by God, while Calvinists generally consider Sunday (the first day) as a day of worship.
2. Activity restrictions: SDA church teaches that on Saturdays spiritual activities should be carried out and limited to worldly activities, while the Calvinist sect has no special restrictions on activities on Sundays.
3. Worship style: SDA church generally adheres to a more formal and conservative style of worship, with the use of simple church music and no modern musical instruments, while Calvinist schools tend to be more flexible in worship styles and allow the use of modern musical instruments.
4. Sacraments: SDA church practices the sacraments of baptism and communion, while Calvinists generally practice baptism and communion but not in the same practice as the SDA church.
5. Biblical Interpretation: SDA church interprets the bible literally and considers it the ultimate authority in the Christian life, while Calvinists tend to use more analytical and historical-critical methods of bible exegesis.

These differences illustrate that although there are some similarities in theological views between SDA church and Calvinist sect, there are also differences in the understanding and the practice of worship. The difference between SDA church and the Calvinist sect of predestination is the view of human freedom. Calvinists believe that man does not have absolute freedom of choice, and that God determines man's destiny absolutely from the beginning. On the other hand, SDA church believes that humans have freedom of choice, but also believes that God knows the outcome of every human choice beforehand and can use that knowledge in His plan. SDA church tends to teach the view of "the principle of predestination fulfilled" or "predestination in God" in terms of predestination. This means that God has established a plan of salvation for all people, and predestination occurs when a

person chooses to accept that plan by faith. This view contrasts with the Calvinist view that God specifically chooses some people to be saved and others do not.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Conclusion

This research study concluded the comparison of the fundamental beliefs of the SDA church with Calvinist sect about Sabbath, food, worship, predestination are as follows:

1. SDA church's understanding or view with the Calvinist sect regarding the fundamental beliefs about the Sabbath concluded that the SDA church's understanding is more biblical than the Calvinist tradition.
2. SDA church belief on food is more biblical and the practice is in accordance with the Bible compared to the Calvinist sect.
3. SDA church' understanding or views and practices in worship with the Calvinist sect are almost practically the same in their procedures.
4. SDA church's understanding or view with the Calvinist sect regarding predestination differ in view, SDA church is the most in accordance with the Bible.

SDA church has their beliefs and practices as well according to the Bible, while the Calvinist sect has an understanding or belief in accordance with the interpretation of church reformers such as John Calvin and also the general church.

Suggestion

This research study suggests to both streams of belief regarding fundamental beliefs about Sabbath, food, worship, and predestination that SDA church and Calvinist sect have different views in interpretation and practice so that it is necessary to harmonize understanding based on the Bible so as not to increase or reduce understanding even though there are similarities in carrying out their worship. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has biblical beliefs and their practices according to the Bible, while the Calvinist tradition has an understanding according to the interpretation of church reformers such as John Calvin and also the general church.

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