

What is Hyper-Calvinism?

As the name suggests, it is an unbiblical and extreme form of Calvinism. Many are called by this name unfairly today. For instance, modern moderate Calvinists (usually Amyraldians in reality) condemn consistent Calvinists as Hyper-Calvinists, when such is not the case. Those who affirm that Christ only died for the elect and that God only loves those he chose in eternity are historic, consistent Calvinists, not Hyper-Calvinists. Hyper-Calvinism arose mainly amongst certain English Baptists and Congregationalists in the 17th century, e.g. Joseph Hussey (1660-1726), Lewis Wayman (d. 1764), John Brine (1703-1765). It especially applies to a minority of Calvinistic Baptists in England in the 18th century onwards, such as William Gadsby (1773-1844), J. Irons, James Wells, J.C. Philpot and JH Gosden. It is today represented in groups like the Strict Baptists and the *Gospel Standard* magazine (formed by Gadsby in 1835). Many Strict and Particular Baptists became known as *Gospel Standard Strict Baptists*; after 1860, they formed themselves into a distinct denomination. A number of US Southern Baptists are Hyper-Calvinists. Some Hyper-Calvinists have been associated with antinomianism (rejecting all forms of law), but some of this is due to a misunderstanding of terms. The Puritans Tobias Crisp and John Saltmarsh were accused of this but a number of more modern Hyper-Calvinists were/are antinomian.

Errors of teaching include: 1) the *denial of duty-faith* and duty repentance, i.e. denying that every man is commanded by God to repent and believe in Christ. 2) *Refusal to preach the Gospel indiscriminately to all*, only offering it to those who already show signs of regeneration ('awakened' and convicted of sin); i.e. it is wrong to preach to a gathering calling on people to believe in Christ and repent. This led to great introspection which continues to damage people today ('have I been convicted deeply enough', 'am I elect'). Lack of assurance is common amongst such people even after years of being church-goers. 3) *Eternal justification and adoption*: i.e. Christians were never under condemnation or enemies of God; all spiritual blessings occurred in eternity past in Christ and are not experienced today. In other words, believers have always been righteous from eternity (this confuses election and justification). 4) *Denial of progressive sanctification and rewards*. 5) *Confusion on law or even antinomianism*. It does not require much study to see that these are utterly unbiblical ideas. **Errors of practice** in Gospel Standard churches included members refusing all fellowship with churches not on their list, barring other Christians from the Lord's Table and rejecting preachers who were not approved. While the early Hyper-Calvinists had great effect in preaching, in the later 19th century the errors about Gospel preaching led to a dwindling of numbers and the gradual closure of many chapels. There are about 108 left in England, most of which only have a few old people.

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Understanding Ministries

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