FOUR SYSTEMS OF SALVATION: SACRAMENTALISM, ARMINIANISM, CALVINISM, AND TRUE GRACE

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INTRODUCTION

The single most important spiritual question is: "What must I do to have eternal life?" Christianity claims to have the definitive answer. Given the importance of this question (it is a matter of eternal life or death), one would expect those who call themselves Christians to agree on a clear answer. Unfortunately, such is not the case. The various groups that go by the name "Christian" differ radically in their answers.

There are four major strands of Christianity: Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Pentecostalism (*Eerdmans'*, p. 618). Within some of these divisions are many denominations, most of which have a slightly different slant on salvation. Nevertheless, within these four strands of Christianity, there are three major salvation systems. The three major systems are Sacramentalism, Calvinism, and Arminianism. There is a fourth system, which could be called the True Grace system.

The Sacramental system is the official position of Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. Calvinism, Arminianism, and the True Grace system are within the various Protestant and Pentecostal denominations. To complicate matters, these views are not always clear in the minds of their adherents. Talking to a layperson, or even a leader, in any one of these movements can add more confusion than clarity. Therefore, it is essential that, while realizing that there are variations within all camps, as much as possible, the official position of each should be clearly stated.

Thus, this analysis will begin with the official position of each system. In the case of Sacramentalism, the official position of the Roman Catholic Church, as stated at the Council of Trent, will be used. Arminianism, as formally formulated by the Remonstrance (1610) and Calvinism, as articulated at the Synod of Dort (1618-19), will also be considered. Since there has never been an "official" statement of the True Grace system, I will explain it. After stating the official position, the historical development of each position will be traced, and a biblical evaluation will be given.

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SACRAMENTAL SYSTEM OF SALVATION

The Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church claim to be the direct descendants of the Church founded by Jesus Christ Himself. According to them, they are *the* Church. What do they teach concerning salvation?

An Explanation

There are misconceptions about the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church's view of salvation. For one thing, a popular perception among Protestant Evangelicals is that the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church believe salvation is by works. Technically, that is not true. They believe that salvation is by grace! Their system of salvation by grace is called Sacramentalism.

What is Sacramentalism? The word "sacrament" comes from the Latin word *sacramentum*, which means mystery or holy. Everyone acknowledges, including the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, that this term had many meanings in early ecclesiastical writings and that it evolved over the centuries (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, p. 806). Today, the accepted definition is: "A Sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace. The outward sign indicates the invisible (inward) grace" (Frederic, p. 218).

Sacramentalism is the system of salvation that says Jesus Christ authorized qualified administrators (ordained priests) to administer seven sacraments that are means of grace, five of which are necessary for salvation. This definition consists of several elements: 1) Jesus Christ authorized priests to administer sacraments. 2) There are seven sacraments. 3) The seven sacraments are means of grace. 4) Five of the seven sacraments are necessary for salvation, especially baptism, to take away original sin, and the Eucharist (communion or the Lord's Table), where the elements actually become the body and blood of Christ (transubstantiation).

The official Roman Catholic statement concerning sacraments is *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. In his book, *The Creeds of Christendom*, a standard scholarly work on the creeds of the church, Schaff says, "The principal source and highest standard of the doctrine and discipline of the Roman Church are *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* first published in 1564 at Rome by authority of Pius IV" (Philip Schaff, *Creeds*, vol. I, p. 91). So *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* will be used to define and describe Sacramentalism. Cairns, whose book on church history was first printed in 1954 and was revised in 1981, says Schaff's volumes on the creeds "is still the best work to consult for the historical background and the text of the various creeds" (Cairns, p. 121). The text of *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* of the Council of Trent in Schaff covers 129 pages (Schaff, *Creeds*, vol. II, pp. 77-206). Only selected portions will be quoted.

First, a word about the Council itself. The Council of Trent, which was the answer of the Roman Catholic Church to the Protestant Reformation, was held in the Austrian city of Trent. Over a period of almost 18 years, 25 public sessions were held. The principal work, however, was done in committees, which were called congregations. The decisions of the Council were written in a document called *The Canons and Decrees*, which was signed on

January 26, 1564. The *decrees* contain the Church's dogma. The shorter *canons* are statements that condemn the dissenting views, which were the Protestant doctrines.

The Canons and Decrees open with a decree "touching the symbol of faith," which is an introduction that includes a commitment to the Apostles' Creed. Then follow decrees concerning the Canonical Scriptures, Original Sin, and Justification. Most of the document covers decrees and canons on the Sacraments. Toward the end are decrees concerning the mass, purgatory, images, and indulgences.

Using the official statement of the Roman Catholic Church, here is their explanation of their system of salvation called Sacramentalism.

Sacramentalism teaches that Jesus Christ authorized priests to administer sacraments. The Council of Trent made it explicitly clear that Christ authorized the administrators of the sacraments. Under the topic of Holy Orders, Chapter II says, "And the sacred Scriptures show, and the tradition of the Catholic Church has always taught, that this priesthood was instituted by the same Lord our Savior, and that to the Apostles, and their successors in the priesthood, was the power delivered of consecrating, offering, and administering his body and blood, as also of forgiving and of retaining sins." Notice that it says the Lord instituted priests.

In discussing Penance, Chapter V states, "The entire confession of sins was also instituted by the Lord, and is of divine right necessary for all who have fallen after baptism; because that our Lord Jesus Christ, when about to ascend from earth to heaven, left priests his own vicars, as presidents and judges, unto whom all the mortal crimes, into which the faithful of Christ may have fallen, should be carried, in order that, accordance with the power of the keys, they may pronounce the sentence of forgiveness or retention of sins." Again, it says the Lord left priests.

Sacramentalism teaches that *there are seven sacraments*. Under the heading "Decree concerning Sacraments in General," Canon 1 declares, "If one saith, that the sacraments of the New Law were not all instituted by Jesus Christ, our Lord; or, that there are more, or less, than seven, to wit, all Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Order, and Matrimony; or even that any one of these seven is not truly and properly a sacrament; let him be anathema" (an anathema is a formal curse). Later in the document, Holy Orders and Matrimony are each called one of the seven sacraments.

Sacramentalism teaches that sacraments are means of grace. Trent insisted that faith alone is not enough to obtain grace. Under the heading "Decree concerning Sacraments in General," Canon VIII states, "If anyone saith, that by the said sacraments of the New Law grace is not conferred through the act performed, but that faith alone in the divine promise suffices for the obtaining of grace: let him be anathema." Under the general topic, "Decrees on the Sacraments," Trent declared that the sacraments are means of grace. Canon VI says, "If anyone saith, that the sacraments of the New Law do not contain the grace which they signify; or, that they do not confer that grace on those who do not place an obstacle thereunto; as though they were merely outward signs of grace or justice received through grace, and certain marks of the Christian profession, thereby believers are distinguished amongst men from unbelievers: let him be anathema."

Sacramentalism teaches that sacraments are necessary for salvation. In the statement about the "Decrees on the Sacraments," Canon IV says, "If anyone saith, that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary unto salvation, but superfluous; and that, without them, or without the desire thereof, men obtain God, through faith alone, the grace

of justification; though all [the sacraments] are not indeed necessary for every individual: let him be anathema."

The "Decree Concerning Original Sin" declares that the grace that removes original sin is conferred in baptism. "3. If anyone asserts that this sin of Adam, which in its origin is one, and being transfused into all by propagation, not by imitation, is in each one as his own, is taken away either by the powers of human nature or by other remedy than the *one mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ*, who hath reconciled us to God in his own blood, being made unto us justice, sanctification, and redemption; or if he denies that the said merit of Jesus Christ is applied, both to adults and to infants, by the sacrament of baptism rightly administered in the form of the Church; let him be anathema."

"5. If anyone denies that, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is conferred in baptism, the guilt of original sin is remitted; ... let him be anathema." It also asserts that "the merits of Christ's blood are applied to adults and infants by the sacrament of baptism."

After making statements about the sacraments in general, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* spoke about each sacrament. Here are samples of what was written.

1. Baptism. "Canon V. If anyone saith that baptism is free, that is, not necessary unto salvation; let him be anathema."

2. Confirmation. "Canon I. If anyone saith that the confirmation of those who have been baptized is an idol ceremony and not rather a true and proper sacrament, or that of old it was nothing more than a kind of catechism, thereby they were near adolescence gave an account of their faith in the face of the Church: let him be anathema."

3. Eucharist. "Chapter I. In the first place, the holy Synod teaches, and openly and simply professes, that, in the august sacrament of the holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and the wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and man, is truly, really, and substantially contained under the species of those sensible things.... For thus all our forefathers, as many as were in the true Church of Christ, who have treated of this most holy Sacraments, have most openly professed, that our Redeemer instituted this so admirably a sacrament at the last supper, when, after the blessing of the bread and the wine, he testified, in express and clear words, that he gave them his own very body, and his own blood, words which, recorded by the holy Evangelist, and afterward repeated by St. Paul, whereas they carry with them that proper and most manifest meaning in which they were understood by the fathers."

The Council of Trent taught transubstantiation. "Chapter IV. And because that Christ, our Redeemer, declared that which he offered under the species of bread to be truly his own body, therefore has it ever been a firm belief in the Church of God, and this holy Synod doth now declare it anew, that, by the consecration of the bread and wine, a conversion is made of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood; which was conversion is, by the Holy Catholic Church, suitably and properly called Transubstantiation."

4. Penance. "Chapter I. He (God) hath bestowed a remedy of life even on those who may, after baptism, have delivered themselves up to the servitude of sin and the power of the devil, the sacrament to wit of Penance, by which the benefit of the death of Christ is applied to those who have fallen after baptism. Penitence was indeed at all times necessary, to attain to grace and justice, for all men who had defiled themselves by any mortal sin, even for those who begged to be washed by the sacrament of baptism."

"Canon I. If anyone saith that in the Catholic Church penance is not truly and properly a sacrament instituted by Christ our Lord for reconciling the faithful unto God, as often as they fall into sin after baptism: let him be anathema."

"Canon VI. If any one denieth, either that sacramental confession was instituted, or is necessary to salvation, of divine right; or saith, that the manner of confessing secretly to a priest alone, which the Church hath ever observed from the beginning, and doth observe, is alien from the institution and command of Christ, and is a human invention: let him be anathema."

5. Extreme Unction. "Chapter I. Now, this sacred unction of the sick was instituted by Christ our Lord, as truly and properly a sacrament of the new law … For the unction very aptly represents the grace of the Holy Ghost."

6. Holy Orders. "Chapter III. Whereas, by the testimony of Scripture, by the Apostolic tradition, and the unanimous consent of the Fathers, it is clear that grace is conferred by sacred ordination, which is performed by words and outward signs, no one ought to doubt that Order is truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of holy Church."

7. Matrimony**.** "Canon I. If anyone saith, that matrimony is not truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelic law, [a sacrament] instituted by Christ the Lord; but that it has been invented by men in the Church; and that it does not confer grace: let him be anathema."

In light of what the other systems say about salvation, it is important to note that the Council of Trent taught that assurance of salvation is not possible. Under the topic of Decree on Justification, the Council said: "Chapter X. Seeing that no one can know with a certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God. Chapter XI. No one ought to flatter himself up with faith alone, fancying that by faith alone he is made an heir and will obtain the inheritance. Chapter XII. No one, moreover, so long as he is in this mortal life, ought so far to presume as regards the secret mystery of divine predestination as to determine for certain that he is assuredly in the number of the predestined, as if it were true that he that is justified, either cannot sin anymore, or, if he do sin, that he ought to promise himself an assured repentance; for except by special revelation, it cannot be known whom God hath chosen unto himself."

The Eastern Orthodox Churches agree with the Roman Catholic view of sacraments. Timothy Ware was a graduate of Oxford University, a Bishop in the Orthodox Church, and a Lecturer in Eastern Orthodox Studies at Oxford. In his book *The Orthodox Church*, Ware says, "The Orthodox Church speaks customarily of seven sacraments, basically the same seven as in Catholic theology" (Ware, p. 281).

Sacramentalism, then, is the view that Jesus Christ Himself authorized priests and instituted seven sacraments as means of grace (necessary for salvation) and that these seven have come down to us unchanged from that time to this. Such a claim certainly needs to be examined.

Historical Development

Sacramentalists believe that tradition, as well as Scripture, is authoritative. Thus, it is appropriate that church history be considered. But first, remember the Scriptures themselves claim that Scripture is the final revelation of God. Jude speaks of "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). The apostle John concluded the

book of Revelation. Appropriately it concludes the Bible with the warning, "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues written in this book: and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the book of life, from the holy city, and the things written in this book" (Rev. 22:18-19). God has spoken, clearly stating not to add to or subtract from what He has said. The Scripture is the final authority. The Scripture alone, then, should settle this issue. That being granted, what is the historical development of the sacraments?

Priesthood In the earliest Christian writings, apart from the New Testament, nothing is mentioned about priests administering sacraments. These writings include the Epistle to Diognetus (ca. 70), the Didache (written before 100), Clement of Rome (97), Polycarp (110), Ignatius (116), the Epistle of Barnabas (130), the Shepherd of Hermas (150), etc.

Justin Martyr (150) describes a church service in Rome. His description has been called "the oldest systematic description of Sunday worship" (*Eerdmans'*, p. 126). Justin writes, "At the end of the prayers, we greet one another with a kiss. Then the president of the brethren is brought bread and a cup of wine mixed with water. He takes them and offers up praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and gives thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at his hands. When he concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present expressed their joyful assent by saying amen. Then those whom we call deacons give to each of those present the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and carry away a portion to those who are absent." Notice that the president and the deacons of the congregation, not "priests," administered the sacraments.

Cyprian (ca. 255) "mangled" Christian ministers with Old Testament priests and Christian ordinances with Old Testament sacrifices (*Eerdmans'*, pp. 101-102). He thought of the clergy as sacrificing priests in offering Christ's body and blood in the communion service, which later developed into the concept of transubstantiation (Cairns, p. 113; *Eerdmans'*, p. 83).

Seven Sacraments Early Christian writers do not say anything about seven sacraments. Augustine (354-430) taught that there were thirty sacraments. Peter Damian (ca. 1007-1072) enumerated twelve. Following Augustine, Hugo of St. Victor (1096-1141) listed thirty. Peter Lombard (ca. 1100-ca. 1160) was the first to limit the sacraments to seven (see his book *Four Books of Sentences*). His views were pronounced orthodox by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). In his book *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) said that Christ instituted seven sacraments, which were channels of grace. It was Aquinas who entrenched the system of seven sacraments. Latourette says that by the fourteenth century, Lombard's list of seven "had gained general acceptance' (Latourette, p. 528). In 1439, the Council of Florence accepted the seven sacraments as authoritative (Cairns, p. 235).

Ware, an Eastern Orthodox scholar, admits, "Only in the seventeenth century, when Latin influence was at its height, did this list become fixed and definite. Before that date, Orthodox writers varied considerably in the number of sacraments: John of Damascus [675-749] speaks of two; Dionysius the Areopagite [ca. 650-725] of six; Joseph, Metropolitan of Ephesus (fifteenth century), of 10; and those Byzantine theologians who speak of seven sacraments differ as to the items they include in the list. Even today, the

number seven has no absolute dogmatic significance for Orthodox theology but is used primarily as a convenience in teaching" (Ware, p. 282).

Means of Grace. The concept of seven sacraments emerged relatively late in church history. However, early church history contains comments that later developed into the idea that certain elements, later termed sacraments, serve as means of grace.

Irenaeus (185) said the Eucharist consisted of two things, "the earthly and the heavenly" (iv. 18. 5), and as such, nourishes our flesh (v. 2. 3; iv. 18. 5). Seeburg concludes that Irenaeus "thinks of a real presence of the body of Christ in the Eucharist" (Seeburg, p. 134). Throughout the next several hundred years, some said that the communion was symbolic and others claimed it was more (the "realist" position; see *Eerdmans'* p. 257).

Augustine (354-430) taught that the sacraments are visible signs of an invisible grace. During the Middle Ages, sacraments began to be defined as outward signs that *conferred* the inner grace they signified (Phillip Cary, *The History of Christian Theology*, lectures produced by the Teaching Company, p. 67).

Both Lombard (ca. 1100-ca. 1160) and Aquinas (1225-1274) taught that the sacraments conferred grace simply by being performed, that is, *ex opere operato* ("from work done"). However, people receiving them through unbelief could put up a barrier to grace (*Eerdmans'*, pp. 257-258). The expression *ex opere operato* was officially adopted by the Council of Trent. The Council of Trent also said the Protestant Reformers considered the sacraments merely "exhortations designed to excite faith" (Luther), "tokens of the truthfulness of the divine promises" (Calvin), or "signs of Christian profession by which the faithful testify that they belong to the Church of Jesus Christ" (Zwingli). The Second Vatican Council declared: "They ('the sacraments') do indeed impart grace, but in addition, the very act of celebrating them most effectively disposes the faithful to receive this grace in a fruitful manner, to worship God duly, and to practice charity" (Vatican Council II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, quoted in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, p. 806).

Necessary for Salvation The earliest Christian authors do not speak of priests ministering seven sacraments that were means of grace necessary for salvation, but some early writers, not all, made statements that indicate baptism is necessary for salvation and some made statements that seem to imply the doctrine that later developed into transubstantiation. Actually, the early authors contradict each other. Some speak of salvation by faith alone, and others seem to say baptism is necessary for salvation. Some speak of the Lord's Supper as symbolic, and others speak of the Eucharist as if it contained the real presence of Christ, which is different from transubstantiation. As late as the Protestant Reformation, the nature of Communion was still being debated—even among the Reformers themselves.

1. Baptism. The Didache (written before 100) says God bestows upon us "eternal life through His Son" (Didache 10:5). Baptism is to be done by immersion in the name of the Trinity, but pouring is allowed if running water is not available and those being baptized are to fast beforehand (Didache 7:2-7), which indicates that infants were not being baptized. It is significant that in discussing baptism, the author does not say baptism is a sacrament, a means of grace, or necessary for salvation.

Clement of Rome (written ca. 97) repeatedly makes statements that indicate he understood the doctrine of justification by faith. What is significant is that nothing in Clement suggests salvation is through sacraments such as baptism.

Polycarp (written ca. 110) says salvation is by faith (Chapter 1; he quotes Eph. 2:8). He not only does not say that priests administered seven sacraments as the means of grace or that the sacraments are necessary for salvation, but he also says things that are the opposite of that, namely that the church had elders and deacons, and that salvation is by faith.

Ignatius (written ca. 116) says that Christ, in His baptism, designed to purify the water by his passion. Clearly, Ignatius departed from the New Testament. He planted *seeds* that later grew into doctrines the Roman Catholic Church held, but that does not mean Ignatius wrote full-blown Roman Catholic doctrine.

The Epistle of Barnabas (written in 130) argues that the life and death of Christ were completely adequate for salvation and the Christians are not bound to observe the Mosaic Law because the Mosaic Covenant ended with the death of Christ (chapter 2). There are many statements to the effect that salvation is by faith, including "Those believing on Him shall live forever" (8, 12) and "They could not be saved unless they put their trust in Him" (chapter 12). Yet the author seems to suggest baptism is also necessary. He quotes Psalm 1:3-6 and says those verses refer to "both the water and the cross. For those words imply blessed are they who, placing their trust in the cross, having gone down into the water; for he says they shall receive a reward in due time: then He declares, I will compensate them." Still later in the same chapter, he quotes Ezekiel 47:12 and says the meaning is "that we indeed descend into the water full of sins and defilement, but come up bearing fruit in our heart having the fear of God and trusting Jesus in our spirit. And whosoever shall eat of these shall live forever, meaning "whoever He declares shall hear you speaking and believe, shall live forever" (chapter 11). Although the Epistle of Barnabas appears to suggest that baptism is necessary for salvation, the author actually taught that salvation comes through faith. Furthermore, his statements do not imply that he believed the seven sacraments to be essential for salvation or a means of grace.

The Shepherd of Hermas (probably written about 150) says the elect are saved by faith (chapter 22). Yet he says baptism is necessary. The Shepherd says, your life "shall be saved by water" (chapter 15) and "we went down into the water and obtained remission of our former sins" (chapter 37). Although the Shepherd of Hermas may contain "seeds" of later Roman Catholic doctrine, he is still a far cry from those later developments. He does not teach that seven sacraments are means of grace and necessary for salvation.

Justin Martyr (ca. 150) describes a church service in Rome, which is "the oldest systematic description of Sunday worship" (*Eerdmans'*, p. 126). He says no one is allowed to share (the Eucharist) unless he or she believes that the things we teach are true and has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins and unto a second birth and is living as Christ commanded.

Irenaeus (ca. 185) calls baptism "regeneration to God." *He says, "*It was not for nothing that Naaman of old, when suffering from leprosy, was purified upon his being baptized, but [this served] as an indication to us. For as we are lepers in sin, we are made clean, by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord from our old transgressions, being spiritually regenerated as newborn babes, even as the Lord has declared: 'Except a man be born again through water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'" Irenaeus even taught infant baptism. He says, "He (Jesus) came to save all through himself; all, I say, who through him are reborn in God: infants, children, youths, and old men. Therefore, he passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, sanctifying infants; a child for children, sanctifying those who are of that age ... (so that) he might be the perfect

teacher in all things, perfect not only in respect to the setting forth of truth but perfect also with respect to relative age."

Tertullian (ca. 200) wrote the earliest surviving work about baptism, entitled *On Baptism*. In it, he criticized the practice of the baptism of children. He also mentions "prayer to 'sanctify' the water. From this point, it was widely believed that baptism automatically washed away sins" (*Eerdmans'*, p. 10).

Hippolytus of Rome (ca. 215) gives an account of a baptism at Rome. He wrote, "When the person being baptized goes down into the water, he who baptizes him, putting his hand on him, shall say, 'Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty?' And the person being baptized shall say: 'I believe.' Then, holding his hand on his head, he shall baptize him once. And then he shall say, 'Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was born of the Holy Spirit, of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and was dead and buried, and rose again the third day, alive from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and sat at the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead?' And when he says, 'I believe,' he is baptized again. And again, he shall say, 'Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, in the holy church, and the resurrection of the body?' The person being baptized shall say: 'I believe,' and then he is baptized a third time" (*Eerdmans'*, p. 115). This is unmistakably a case of an adult being baptized by immersion in Rome in 215 AD. What he does not say, however, is significant. He does not say that baptism is a sacrament that is necessary for salvation.

Cyprian (ca. 255) says, "If, in the case of the worst sinners and those who formerly sinned much against God, when afterward they believe, the remission of their sins is granted and no one is held back from baptism and grace, how much more, then, should an infant not be held back, who, having but recently been born, has done no sin, except that, born of the flesh according to Adam, he has contracted the contagion of that old death from his first being born. For this very reason, he (an infant) approaches more easily to receive the remission of sins because the sins forgiven him are not his own but those of another."

On the one hand, Cyprian seems to be saying that people receive the remission of sins when they believe. On the other hand, he teaches that infants should be baptized for the removal of Adam's sin. "His (Cyprian's) influence on the later Western church was immense and largely harmful" (*Eerdmans'*, p. 83). By the mid-third century, infant baptism was common. "Both adult and infant baptism was practiced until the sixth century, after which, normally, only infant baptism was practiced" (*Eerdmans'*, p. 10).

Augustine (354-430) taught that baptism washed away the original sin of Adam (the guilt of Adam) and the sins committed before baptism. He advocated the baptism of infants on the grounds that it was the prescribed way of washing away original sin, that is, the sin imputed from Adam. He taught that baptism was necessary for salvation. "The doctrine of original sin, which Augustine set out, made it vital for the church to believe in the absolute necessity of baptism for salvation" (*Eerdmans'*, p. 257). Celestius challenged infant baptism. Augustine, however, helped make it a regular practice (*Eerdmans'*, p. 199).

Augustine was the first to define the sacraments as visible signs of an invisible grace. If not the founder, Augustine was at least the forerunner of the Roman Catholic Church. Schaff called him "the principal theological creator of the Latin-Catholic system as distinct from the Greek Catholicism on the one hand, and from evangelical Protestantism on the other" (Schaff, *History*, vol. 3, p. 1018). Warfield said that in Augustine, "the seed out of

which the tree that we know was a Roman Catholic Church has grown" (Warfield, p. 312; see also Warfield's comment on p. 321).

The Synod of Orange (529) attributed more to baptism than Augustine did. Augustine held that baptism is essential to the remission of original sin, but the Synod of Orange declared that through the grace received at baptism, "all who had been baptized can and ought, by the aid and support of Christ, to perform those things which belong to the salvation of the soul if they labor faithfully." Latourette states, "The implication is that all, and not merely, as Augustine held, those of the limited number of the elect, can if they are baptized, through the grace which comes through baptism, if they work at it faithfully, by the aid and support of Christ, be assured of salvation. They need not be distressed by the fact that they are not of those to whom, through grace, perseverance has not been given. Man's will has not been so impaired by Adam's fall but that, healed by grace and aided by Christ, it can achieve salvation. Here was semi-Augustinism, a weakening of pure Augustinism and a view of baptism which were to characterize Latin or Roman Christianity in succeeding centuries" (Latourette, p. 182).

To sum up the early history of baptism: While the earliest surviving Christian writings indicate that salvation is by faith alone, some early statements could be called seeds that later grew into the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, but at the same time, adult baptism by immersion was practiced in Rome in AD 215. As for infant baptism, by the end of the second century, it was a topic of debate. It was common in the middle of the third century, but it was not until the sixth century that it became the norm. Clearly, the concept of the baptism of infants for the remission of original sin was a rather late development in church history.

2. Confirmation. Catholic theologians are uncertain as to the time when Confirmation (in Catholicism, Confirmation is a rite that confirms baptized people in their faith and admits them to full participation in the church) *as a sacrament* was instituted (Boettner, p. 191).

3. Eucharist. The Didache (written before 100) discusses the Lord's Supper; thus, it is significant that the author does not say it is a sacrament, a means of grace, or necessary for salvation. Clement of Rome (written ca. 97) repeatedly makes statements that indicate he understood the doctrine of justification by faith. Nothing in Clement suggests that salvation is through sacraments such as the Eucharist. Polycarp (written ca. 110) says salvation is by faith (Chapter 1; he quotes Eph. 2:8). As was pointed out earlier, he not only does not say that priests administered seven sacraments as the means of grace or that the sacraments are necessary for salvation, he says things that are the opposite of that, namely that the church had elders and deacons and that salvation is by faith. Other early writers did not teach Sacramentalism, including the Epistle of Barnabas (130), the Shepherd of Hermas (probably written about 150), and 2 Clement (ca. 150).

Ignatius (ca. 116) says the church is "the society where sacrifices are offered," but there is no direct connection between the bread in Communion and sacrifice in that passage. The sacrifice could be the sacrifice of praise. In his letter to the Romans, Ignatius speaks of "the bread of God, and the heavenly bread, the bread of life, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ" and "I desire to drink of God, namely His blood, which is incorruptible love and eternal life" (Rom. 7), but in the same passage he says, "There is within me a water that lives and speaks, saying to me inwardly come to the Father" (Rom. 7). On the other hand, he speaks of the Eucharist being "the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ" (Smyrna 7). In the longer

version of his letter to the Ephesians, Ignatius calls the bread "the medicine of immortality," saying it is "the antidote to prevent us from dying, which causes that we should live forever in Jesus Christ" (Eph. 20), but scholars say this longer version is not genuine.

Ignatius is fighting against Docetism (Cairns, p. 74; Smith, p. 80), the view that Jesus only seemed to have a real physical body of flesh and blood. He pushes the idea that Jesus became flesh so far that He says, "I know that after His resurrection also He was still possessed of flesh and I believe that He is so now" (Smyrna 3). He likens the one flesh of Jesus to the one Eucharist. "Take heed, then, to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to show forth the unity of His blood; one altar; as there is one bishop, among the presbytery and deacons" (Philadelphians 4). In other words, "Ignatius put a high value on the Eucharist, or communion, as a means of ensuring unity, and of stressing the reality of Jesus becoming a man" (*Eerdmans'*, p. 80).

The departure from the New Testament concerning elders, baptism, and the Lord's Supper by someone this close to New Testament times should not surprise us because people *during* the New Testament times did things just as bad doctrinally, if not worse. No less than the apostle Paul taught the believers at Galatia about justification by faith alone. Soon after he left them, they were being persuaded by false teachers that they had to be circumcised to be saved!

Justin Martyr (ca. 150) says, "For we do not receive them (bread and wine) as common bread and common drink; but as Jesus Christ our Savior, having been made flesh by the word of God, hath both flesh and blood for our salvation; similarly we have been taught that the food which is blessed by the word of prayer transmitted from him, and by which our blood and flesh are changed and nourished is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the Apostles, in the memoirs called Gospels composed by them, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, said, this do in remembrance of me, this is my body; and that, in a similar way, having taken the cup and given thanks, he said, This is my blood; and gave it to them alone."

"For Justin, the act of communion was a 'memorial of the passion' of Christ. The elements of bread and wine over which thanks had been given nurtured the lives of Christians by assimilation—a thought derived from John 6. This idea played an increasing role in the explanations of the Eucharist as a sacramental sharing in the divine life. Justin and Irenaeus may possibly allude to a special prayer, later known as the *epiclesis*, which called upon' the divine Word to come upon the bread and the wine. It is not surprising that, especially among the Gnostics, magical ideas about the nature of the consecrated elements began to emerge" (*Eerdmans'*, p. 126).

Irenaeus (ca. 185) says the Eucharist consists of two things, "the earthly and the heavenly" (iv. 18. 5), and as such, nourishes our flesh (v. 2. 3; iv. 18. 5). Seeburg concludes that Irenaeus "thinks of a real presence of the body of Christ in the Eucharist" (Seeburg, p. 134). Throughout the next several hundred years, some said that the communion was symbolic and others claimed it was more (the "realist" position; see *Eerdmans'* p. 257).

Tertullian (ca. 200) says, "Having taken bread and having distributed it to His disciples, He made it His own Body by saying, 'This is My Body'—that is, the 'figure of My Body.' A figure, however, there could not have been unless there was, in truth, a body. Some empty thing, which is a phantasm, was not able to satisfy a figure. Or, if He pretended that

bread was His Body because, in truth, He lacked a body, then he must have given bread for us. It would support the vanity of Marcion had bread been crucified! But why call His Body bread, and not rather a pumpkin, which Marcion had in place of a brain! Marcion did not understand how ancient is that figure of the Body of Christ, who said Himself through Jeremias: 'They have devised a device against Me, saying, 'Come, let us throw wood onto his bread'—the cross, of course, upon His Body" (Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4:40:3)

"In the third century, the early Christian identification of the eucharistic bread and wine with the Lord's body and blood continued unchanged, although a difference of approach can be detected in East and West. The outline, too, of a more considered theology of the eucharistic sacrifice begins to appear …. In the West, the equation of the consecrated elements with the body and blood was quite straightforward, although the fact that the presence is sacramental was never forgotten. Hippolytus speaks of 'the body and the blood' through which the Church is saved, and Tertullian regularly describes [e.g., de orat. 19; de idol. 7] the bread as 'the Lord's body.' The converted pagan, he remarks [De pud. 9], 'feeds on the richness of the Lord's body, that is, on the eucharist.' The *REALISM* of his theology comes to light in the argument [De res. carn. 8], based on the intimate relation of body and soul, that just as in baptism the body is washed with water so that the soul may be cleansed, so in the eucharist 'the flesh feeds on Christ's body and blood so that the soul may be filled with God.'Clearly, his assumption is that the Savior's *BODY* and *BLOOD* are as *REAL* as the baptismal *WATER*" (Kelly, p. 211).

Cyprian (ca. 255) "mangled" Christian ministers with Old Testament priests and the Christian ordinances with Old Testament sacrifices (*Eerdmans',* pp. 101-102). Cyprian thought of the clergy as sacrificing priests in offering Christ's body and blood in the communion service, which later developed into the concept of transubstantiation (Cairns, p. 113; *Eerdmans',* p. 83).

Augustine (354-430) says the Lord's Supper becomes the spiritual presence of Christ's body and blood (Vance, p. 55), and it is necessary for salvation.

Paschasius Radbertus (ca. AD 831), the influential French Abbot of Corbie, took the "realist" doctrine much closer toward transubstantiation. He wrote an extensive treatise on the Eucharist entitled *On the Body and Blood of the Lord.* Latourette summarizes what Radbertus said: "He held that while to the senses, the bread and the wine in the sacrament remained unaltered, by a miracle the *substantia* of the body and the blood of Christ, the very body which was his on the earth, is present in them. However, this change takes place only for those who believe it and accept it in faith, and it is not effective for the unbeliever" (Latourette, p. 360). This "was the first clear statement of a doctrine of the 'real presence' of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist, suggesting what was later called transubstantiation" *(Eerdmans',* p. 231).

Ratramnus (d. 870), a monk at the monastery of Corbie, opposed Radbertus, describing the elements of the Eucharist as "symbols." He was one of the last to do so. In 1050, his book was condemned by the Catholic Church.

Berengar of Tours (ca. 999–1088) denounced transubstantiation. This provoked opposition from Lanfranc before Bec Abbey in Normandy, leading to further definitions of transubstantiation. Berengar held that a real and true change took place at the consecration in the Mass, but according to him, the change was spiritual. The bread and the wine remained of the same substance. Lanfranc and other theologians debated with him, insisting that the bread and the wine were changed into Christ's body and blood, while

the "accidents," the touch, taste, sight, and smell of the bread and wine, remained the same. A long and bitter controversy raged from 1045 to 1080. During this debate, the term "transubstantiation" emerged and took on Lanfranc's definition. Berengar was condemned by the Catholic Church and forced to renounce his views (*Eerdmans',* p. 274)

Finally, in 1215, at the Fourth Lateran Council, convoked by Pope Innocent III, transubstantiation was adopted as orthodox. This Council concluded that the bread and the wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ at the moment of consecration. The Fourth Lateran Council made transubstantiation the official position of the Catholic Church. The doctrine of transubstantiation eventually led to the barring of lay people from handling the wine, lest the transubstantiated wine should spill and cause a scandal.

To sum up, the early history of the Lord's Supper shows that, although the earliest surviving Christian writings indicate salvation is by faith, some early statements could be seen as seeds of later Roman Catholic doctrine. At the same time, the Lord's Supper was referred to as a memorial as early as AD 150. In the latter part of the second century, there are statements suggesting the real presence of the body of Christ in the Eucharist. In the middle of the third century, it was said that the clergy was sacrificing priests by offering the body and blood of Christ in the communion. However, for the next several hundred years, opinions on the matter were divided, with some believing the communion was symbolic and others claiming it was real. The first clear statement of a doctrine of the "real presence" of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist did not occur until 831, and even then, the idea was opposed by those claiming the elements of the Eucharist were symbols. In the 11th century, transubstantiation was denounced, but it was adopted as Orthodox at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

4. Penance. Penance is commonly called "confession," meaning confession to a priest. The practice of individuals confessing their sins to a priest began in the eleventh century. In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council made it canon law that every Catholic Christian must go to confession in his parish once a year.

5. Extreme Unction. In its present form, this sacrament was not introduced into the church until the 12th century. Furthermore, Roman Catholic theologians are uncertain as to the time of its institution (Boettner, p. 192).

6. Holy Orders. According to Sacramentalism, the first five sacraments are indispensable to salvation. Holy orders are optional (Boettner, p. 189).

7. Matrimony. Like holy orders, matrimony is optional (Boettner, p. 189).

To sum up, during the first several hundred years of church history, all kinds of people said all kinds of things about baptism, communion, and salvation. The fact that someone said something doesn't mean that it is biblically accurate or that it was the church's official position, much less the church of the first century. A quote from a "church father" is simply something someone said hundreds of years ago. The fact that an individual *lived* closer to the New Testament times does not mean his *opinion* was closer to the New Testament. In fact, just because someone lived *during* New Testament times does not mean his opinion is closer to the apostles. Just read the New Testament (1 Cor. 15:12; 2 Thess. 2:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:17-18)!

It should also be noted that no council has rescinded Trent's conclusions since the Council of Trent. Many think the Second Vatican Council (October 11, 1962-1965) radically changed the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, many significant changes were made: worship services are now conducted in the language of the people, the priest now

frequently offers the congregation both bread and wine, the exposition of Scripture occupies a more prominent part of the service, and dialogue with other Christians, now called "separated brethren," is encouraged. But these changes are pastoral, not doctrinal. *The Second Vatican Council did not change Sacramentalism*. Vatican II declared that the sacraments "do indeed impart grace" (Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, quoted in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, p. 806; more of this quotation will be given later).

Pope John XXIII stated at the Second Vatican Council's opening, "I do accept entirely all that has been decided and declared at the Council of Trent." Every cardinal, bishop, and priest who participated in the Vatican II Council signed a document affirming Trent.

Twenty years after Vatican II, Dr. John Van Engen, a member of the Christian Reformed Church and a professor of medieval history at the University of Notre Dame, said, "But Vatican Council II also remained true to Catholic Tradition as a whole, often recovering older themes and teachings that had been lost or minimized during the latter Middle Ages and the Counter-Reformation." Later in the same article, he added, "The theological impact of the council has perhaps been the most surprising. Thomas Aquinas, the Tridentine decrees, and Neo-Scholastic theology—all of which defined Catholicism theologically for centuries—have, intentionally or not, lost their place of honor almost overnight, and nothing else has as yet taken their place" (Van Engen, "Catholicism 20 years after Vatican II," *Christianity Today*, Feb. 18, 1983, p.50).

Today, a wide range of theological views, including traditional Catholicism, theological liberalism, Pentecostalism, and even Evangelicalism, can be found among the priests and people in the American Roman Catholic Church, but the *official doctrinal position of Roman Catholicism is still Sacramentalism*. The decrees of Trent may have lost their place of honor, as Van Engen suggests, but the official doctrinal position of Catholicism has not changed. Remember, the Council of Trent used the works of Aquinas to draft their decrees, and in 1879, the Pope declared Aquinas's theology *eternally* valid.

Conclusion: It is clear from church history that the Sacramental system evolved over hundreds of years. The Sacramentalists themselves are forced to admit that the seven-sacrament system of salvation originated in church history. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says, "The formula that there are seven and only seven Sacraments of the New Law was first set down in the 12th century as a result of the theological reflection and systematic presentation that commenced at that time. It was not until the 16th century at the Council of Trent that the church defined the truth that there are seven Sacraments of the New Law, no more or no less" (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, p. 811).

How do they defend their claim that Jesus Himself instituted the Sacraments? The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* addresses that question in an article that says, "There is still an open question regarding the exactness with which Christ instituted the Sacraments. There is an agreement that Baptism and the Eucharist were established to the extent that He Himself specifically indicated the rite of these in such a way that the church cannot alter them. With regard to the other sacraments, however, there is considerable evidence to support only a generic institution that was immediate. Such a generic determination by Christ need involve no more than His decision regarding the significance and efficacy, leaving it to the church to decide upon a rite apt to signify the grace to be given. The popularity of the claim that these sacraments were generically instituted owes much to the historical evidence of the changes in their ritual. Because the sacraments are the main actions by which Christ's

priestly work of worship and salvation began at the incarnation and continues in our times, Christ is the principal priest in every sacramental action, as Vatican Council II makes clear (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy 7). The risen Head of the Church continues to draw men into the saving act, which becomes sacramentally present in his church. 'Christ dynamically held in the act of raising from the dead is one who makes each Sacrament productive within us of that same death to sin and resurrection to the life of his Father. The Lord simply sacramentalizes his permanent act of salvation for us and turns His everlasting intercession before the throne of His Father into a visible form for us to grasp. This is the most basic meaning of the church's dogma: Christ instituted the sacraments. They owe their very existence and effectiveness right here and now to Jesus Christ (Miller 27)" (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, pp. 810-811).

G. K. Chesterton, the renowned Catholic author, attempts to address the issue of the evolution of the sacraments. He says, "The critics of Catholic theology seem to suppose that it is not so much an evolution as an evasion; that it is at best an adaptation. They fancy that its very success is the success of surrender. But that is not the natural meaning of the word development. When we talk of a child being well-developed, we mean that he has grown bigger and stronger with his own strength, not that he is padded with borrowed pillows or walks on stilts to make him look taller. When we say that a puppy develops into a dog, we do not mean that his growth is a gradual compromise with a cat; we mean that he becomes more doggy and not less. Development is the expansion of all the possibilities and implications of a doctrine, as there is time to distinguish them and to point them out; and the point here is that the enlargement of medieval theology was simply the full comprehension of that theology" (Chesterton, p. 28).

Chesterton wants to call the changes over the centuries "developments." The problem is that the earlier teaching differs from *the later doctrine.* This is not the case of a boy growing into a man or a pup growing into a dog. It is a dog growing into a man. It is like arguing that because the dog and the man both have legs, they are the same thing. The simple fact is that in nature and number, what the New Testament teaches and what Catholicism teaches are two entirely different things. Just look at what the New Testament says.

An Evaluation

Authorized Administrator (ordained priest) The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Jesus Christ authorized priests to administer sacraments, but neither Jesus nor the apostles ordained priests. The priests mentioned in the New Testament are Old Testament, Jewish priests. There was no office (or function) of priest in the *church*. The New Testament church had elders and deacons, not priests. In the New Testament, the words "bishop" and "elder" are both used for the same office (Titus 1:5, 7). From what is said about this function, it consisted of older men (elders) from within a congregation who had that congregation's oversight (bishop). In the New Testament, nothing is ever said about an elder/bishop being a priest or administering sacraments. The priesthood in the church did not appear until several hundred years after Christ died.

How can the Roman Catholic Church say the Lord instituted priests when the New Testament does not mention priests? The Council of Trent explains, "The proper ministers of this sacrament are the Presbyters (that is, elders) of the Church; by which name are to

be understood, in that place, not the elders by age, or the foremost in dignity amongst the people, but either bishops or priests by bishops rightly ordained *by* the imposition of the hands of the priesthood (Extreme Unction. Chapter III). In other words, the New Testament word "elder" is interpreted to mean "priest"!

Seven Sacraments The Roman Catholic Church teaches there are seven and only seven sacraments, no more and no less. The New Testament knows nothing of the seven sacraments. The idea of seven sacraments was not introduced until the twelfth century and was not generally accepted until several centuries later.

How does Roman Catholicism explain the fact that the idea of seven sacraments was developed during church history? The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states, "It was not until the 16th century at the Council of Trent that the Church defined the truth that there are seven sacraments of the New Law, no more or no less (Denz, 1601). The reasons for this late official statement were mainly the gradual development of the term 'sacrament,' which was for centuries applied to many things other than the seven saving rites of the New Law and the absence until this time of the challenge of the sacramentality of some of them.

"The formula that there are seven and only seven sacraments of the New Law was first set down in the twelfth century as a result of the theological reflection and systematic presentation that commenced at that time. Before it had been determined in what a Sacrament (in a sense limited to the seven saving rites of the New Law) consisted, it was impossible to enumerate those to which uniquely such a definition applied. Because of the vague and wide use of the term 'sacrament' among the early writers, there was no way of establishing a certain enumeration of the Sacraments of the New Law that clearly differentiated them from the Old Law and other rites and practices in the Church. There were from the beginning the seven saving rites, but they were not distinguished as 'sacraments' in our present sense of the word until a definition of this term was developed. We do not mean to imply that the seven-fold numbering depends solely on the proper definition of the term, however. In the course of the development of sacramental theology, it became evident that there were seven rites, which had existed from the beginning, and held a unique place in the economy of salvation (Leeming, 553-589)" *(New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, p. 811).

Sacraments are a means of grace. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that sacraments are a means of grace. The New Testament, however, teaches that faith, apart from any work, is the means of grace (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 4:4, 16; 11:6; Acts 18:27). Beyond that, believers are to come boldly to God's Throne of Grace, not to a priest, to receive grace (Heb. 4:16). God gives grace to the humble, not to the recipient of a sacrament (Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5). You will search the New Testament in vain to find even a hint that grace is received in any way other than faith and going directly to the Throne of Grace in heaven, not an altar on earth.

Sacraments are necessary for salvation. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the sacraments are necessary for salvation. Look at what the New Testament says.

1. Baptism. Does the Bible teach that infant baptism is necessary for salvation? In the first place, in the Scripture, there is no such thing as infant baptism for any reason. The Bible does not contain one example of a baby being baptized. The Council of Trent did not use any passage to support its claim that infants should be baptized, but some have argued that Acts 16:31 is an illustration of infant baptism. It says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household." The claim is that the word

"household" includes children. The word "household" may, in some cases, include children who are infants, but not in Acts 16 because verse 32 says, "Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and all who were in his house" and verse 34 says that the Philippian jailer "believed in God with all his house." If there were any children in the household who were saved in Acts 16, they were old enough to hear the Word, which means they understood it, because they all believed it!

Furthermore, the Bible does not teach that baptism is necessary for salvation. John 3:5 does not teach Baptismal Regeneration. In fact, it does not even refer to baptism! In John 3, Jesus makes the statement, "Unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:3). In response, Nicodemus asks, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (Jn. 3:4). Jesus' answer is, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:5). In the context of this conversation, it is more natural to understand Jesus' use of the word "water" as a reference to physical birth rather than baptism. As every mother knows, all children are literally born "out of water." So, when Nicodemus asked, "Can a man be born a second time from his mother's womb?" Jesus, in essence, conceded that a man had to be born of water, that is, physically, but He went on to insist that the second birth was spiritual in nature. Thus, John 3 does not teach that water baptism is necessary for salvation. It is teaching that physical birth is. In other words, a person must be born before he can be born again. John 3:6 confirms this view; it says, "That which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of Spirit is spirit."

In Acts 10, Gentiles believed and received the Holy Spirit before they were baptized (Acts 10:44-48). In other words, they were saved *before* they were baptized.

2. Confirmation. Does the Bible teach that after regeneration, a person receives the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands? Granted, that took place in Acts 8, but it only occurred one other time in all of Scripture, namely when Paul laid hands on the disciples of John in Acts 19. The question is, "Are these two examples normative? Or are they two special cases?" There are only four instances of people receiving the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts (see Acts 2, 8, 10, 19). In two of these passages, people received the Holy Spirit after conversion and with the laying on of hands (Acts 8, 19). In the other two, it was *at conversion* and *without* the laying on of hands (Acts 2, 10). So the question becomes, which set of examples is the norm?

The epistles indicate that all believers have the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." Indeed, Paul says, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Rom. 8:9; see also Eph. 1:3; Col. 2:10). So, at least by the time Paul wrote his epistles, all Christians received the Holy Spirit at conversion. Therefore, the only logical conclusion is that the two cases of believers receiving the Holy Spirit after conversion in Acts were exceptions, not the rule.

These exceptions were part of a transition process. First, the Holy Spirit came upon the Jews (Acts 2). Then, the Holy Spirit came to the Samaritans (Acts 8). As has been pointed out by many expositors, it was necessary for them to receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands and, therefore, after their conversion. Had it not been done that way, the longstanding animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans would have produced two separate churches. After the Samaritans, the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10). Finally, some disciples of John received the Holy Spirit when Paul laid hands on them

(Acts 19). Many scholars have argued that the very nature of the book of Acts is to vindicate Paul. It is striking that everything Peter does, Paul does. Indeed, Acts is divided into two parts: the acts of Peter (Acts 1-12) and the acts of Paul (Acts 13-28). Hence, Acts 19 is an isolated case at the end of a transition period to demonstrate that Paul had as much authority as Peter. The point is that Acts 8 is not the norm, nor is it teaching the doctrine of a confirmation sacrament.

3. Holy Eucharist. The word Eucharist, which means "thanksgiving," is one of the names of communion. Does the Bible teach that the elements of Communion literally become the body and blood of Christ and that partaking of communion is necessary for salvation? The answer is "No." The passage most often used to support the idea that the elements of communion become Christ's actual body and blood (Jn. 6:38) is not even remotely suggest such a concept. In the first place, John 6 is not talking about communion. The Lord's Supper, or communion, was not instituted until the Last Supper, which was several years after this time. Furthermore, John 6 uses the word "flesh" instead of the word "body." In no passage clearly referring to communion does the New Testament ever use the word "flesh" to refer to the Lord's Supper.

The other passage that is used is Matthew 26:28. The Sacramentalists point out that when Jesus instituted communion, He held the cup in His hand and said, "This is My blood" and the disciples took Him literally, but Jesus obviously did not mean that literally. At that moment, His blood was still flowing in His veins! He also said, "I am the door," but that does not mean He was made of wood. These are figures of speech.

Nor does the Bible say that the Lord's Supper is a means of grace. Nothing in the passage says it is, nor is there even a hint to that effect. In fact, all that is said is, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Lk. 22:19), which indicates that this was nothing more than the institution of a memorial, not the creation of a sacrament necessary for salvation.

4. Penance. Penance is the sacrament by which sins committed after baptism are forgiven through the absolution of the priest. In other words, when a person confesses to a priest (and perhaps does some penitential acts, usually prayers), the priest pronounces forgiveness.

According to Sacramentalism, Jesus promised the Sacrament of Penance when He announced to Peter that He would give him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Matthew 16:19 says, "I will give you the keys to the kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind of earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." After His resurrection, Christ fulfilled this promise when He breathed on His Apostles (Jn. 20:23). This power was transmitted by the Apostles to their successors and thence to all priests of the Catholic Church.

The Sacrament of Penance consists of contrition, confession, and satisfaction. Frederic says, "The form of the Sacrament must be expressed in words; absolution cannot be given in writing. These words must be pronounced on the penitent who is present so that the voice may be heard or the person may be seen. The words of absolution are 'I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen'" (Frederic, p. 237).

Does the Bible teach that a person must confess his or her sins to a priest to be forgiven? Again, the answer is "No." In the first place, the Bible does not teach that Jesus Christ gave Peter the power to forgive sin. Peter certainly did not think that he had the power to forgive sin. Instead of pronouncing forgiveness on Simon, the Sorcerer, as the Catholics claim he

had the power to do, Peter said, "Repent therefore of this your wickedness and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you" (Acts 8:22).

Furthermore, while the Bible teaches that believers should confess their sins to receive forgiveness (1 Jn. 1:9), it nowhere teaches that this confession should be made to a priest, a preacher, or any other person. The only passage that even comes close to suggesting such a practice is James 5:16, which says, "Confess your trespasses one to another." Because this verse is in the context of elders anointing a sick person with oil, it is sometimes claimed that the confession is to the elders, but that is not what the verse says. In the Greek text, the word "another" is a reciprocal pronoun. In other words, this verse says that two people must confess *to one another*. If the sick person is confessing to the elders, the verse requires that the elders confess to the sick person! It is much more natural and logical to take the verse in the context of James and conclude that this sick person's sickness was due to sin, probably the sin of fighting with another brother (Jas. 4:1-12). If such is the case, the reciprocal pronoun makes perfect sense. The two believers fighting with each other, which has made one of them sick, should confess to each other.

What about Jesus giving Peter the keys to the Kingdom and telling him that whatever he loosed on earth would be loosed in Heaven? Jesus is not talking about the forgiveness of sins. He says "whatsoever," not "whomsoever." Only Jesus has the power to forgive sins (Mt. 9:6; Acts 8:20-22). As we have seen, Peter didn't understand this to mean that he had the power to forgive sin (Acts 8:22). To the Jews, "keys" represented the authority that belonged to the scribes, those who taught the Law. Binding and loosing were technical terms for the verdict of a teacher of the oral law who declared some actions "bound," that is, forbidden and others "loosed," that is, permitted. In the Greek text, both of these verbs are future-perfect periphrastic. The perfect denotes past action with a present result. The periphrastic form of the perfect emphasizes the existing state. These verbs should be translated "shall have been bound" and "shall have been loosed." Jesus is not saying that decisions on earth would be endorsed "in heaven," that is, by God. He is saying that Peter will pass on decisions already made in heaven. The Apostles used the keys in Acts 15. They bound and loosed regarding eating things sacrificed to idols. There was no teaching from the Lord in this matter, or they would simply have quoted it.

The Bible does not teach that there is a sacrament called penance, as taught by the Sacramentalists. It does teach the practice of confession to the Lord and, when appropriate, to others one has offended.

5 Extreme Unction. The Second Vatican Council said that this would be officially called "The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick." Does the Bible teach that when a priest anoints a sick person with oil, that person is forgiven? Again, the Bible does not teach that Jesus instituted a sacrament whereby people receive grace when they are anointed with oil. In fact, Jesus did everything but that. He spoke and people were healed. On at least one occasion, He put mud on a blind man's eye, but it was not His practice to anoint the sick with oil.

James instructed elders to anoint sick people who requested it with oil, but it was "the prayer of faith that will heal the sick" (Jas. 5:15). There is nothing in this passage or in any other passage in the New Testament to suggest that the anointing with oil will take away the sin, which is what the Catholic doctrine of Extreme Unction claims.

6. Holy Orders. Does the Bible teach that God gives special grace to those who the church ordains to be priests? No one involved in spiritual ministry would deny that God's

grace performs all ministries. At the same time, nothing in the New Testament can be interpreted in such a way as to mean that God would give grace to a man to be a priest in the Sacramentalists' sense of the word. The kind of things that a Sacramental Priest does, like bestowing forgiveness on a person who is confessing his sins to him, is not the kind of ministry of which the Scripture speaks. As we have seen, such activity is foreign to the text of Scripture.

7. Matrimony. In the first place, marriage was instituted thousands of years before the institution of the New Covenant. In fact, it was instituted before the Fall! A more accurate reflection of the biblical text would be that God gave the institution of marriage for all of mankind to enjoy. Of course, all married people acknowledge their need of grace to discharge their responsibilities in marriage.

The basis for marriage being a sacrament is a mistranslation of Ephesians 5:31-32, which correctly translated reads, "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." The Vulgate, the Latin translation of the Scriptures, translated "this is a great mystery" as "this is a great sacrament." Martin Luther's opponent at Augsburg, Cardinal Cajetan, admitted that "great mystery" was the correct translation (Boettner, p. 192).

Interestingly, for six or seven centuries after the establishment of the church, people did not acknowledge any claim of the clergy alone to perform marriages. Strong popes, such as Hildebrand, secured for the church complete control over marriage (Boettner, pp. 192-193).

Conclusion: There is no basis for Sacramentalism in the New Testament. Erickson points out that "we fail to find objective efficacy of the sacraments taught in any clear way in the Bible" and "the idea that the ministry or priesthood has a unique or distinctive role fails to find clear expression in the Bible. Indeed, the teaching of passages such as Hebrews 9 appears to contradict this contention." He concludes, "There is little evidence for some of the interpretations which tradition Catholicism has given to various pertinent texts in the Bible. These interpretations are at best doubtful and at worse highly imaginative" (Erickson, p. 1010).

Summary: Sacramentalism, the doctrine that Christ authorized priests to administer seven sacraments, which are means of grace and, therefore, are necessary for salvation, is an unscriptural doctrine that evolved during church history.

The Sacramentalists may claim that they teach salvation by grace and not works, but it is easy to see why they have been charged with teaching salvation by works. In the minds of many, both in and outside of Sacramentalism, salvation via sacraments is tantamount to *doing* something to earn forgiveness.

As Erickson has observed, "What all of this amounts to is that salvation is dependent upon the church. For, in this first place, it is argued that the sacraments, which were entrusted to the church by Christ, are requisite to salvation. And second, the presence of a qualified administrator, namely, an individual ordained by the Church, is required. The essential point in this view is that salvation is affected by the sacraments. They are the means by which salvation is brought about. If we desire to receive salvation, we must receive the sacraments" (Erickson, p. 1010).

THE ARMINIAN SYSTEM OF SALVATION

The decision as to which system of salvation to consider next is complicated because the history and development of both Arminianism and Calvinism are interwoven. In one sense, Calvinism was developed before Arminianism. Yet, in another sense, historically, the *formal* adoption of The Remonstrance (1610), the historical statement of Arminianism, preceded the adoption of the Canons of Dort (1618-19), which have been recognized as the formal statement of Calvinism. Furthermore, the Canons of Dort (Calvinism) were formulated and adopted to react to Arminianism. For that reason, Arminianism will be considered next, although its development cannot be understood apart from the earlier development of Calvinism.

An Explanation

What is Arminianism? Arminianism is the system of salvation that says man, who cannot think or will anything truly good (including believe) without grace, is saved because 1) God determined to save those who would believe on Christ and persevere in faith and obedience, 2) Christ died for all men, and 3) the Holy Spirit, who can be resisted, regenerates and renews the understanding, inclination, and the will. Original Arminianism said that whether or not believers could lose their salvation was yet to be determined. Later, Arminians, however, decided that believers could, indeed, lose their salvation.

Arminianism was formulated because Jacobus Arminius, a Dutch Pastor and later a Professor, reacted to the Calvinists of his day. As a result, after Arminius' death, the Remonstrance was drawn up and officially adopted in 1610. ("Calvinism," as we shall see, was a reaction to the Remonstrance.) The verb "remonstrate" comes from Latin (re = again + monstrare = to show) and means to point out, show, demonstrate, object, protest. The noun "remonstrance" means the act of remonstrating; protest. The Remonstrance, then, was a protest against the Protestants! It was not a counter-reformation, a complete repudiation (the Catholics did that), but a protest nonetheless. Except for the headings, which are in italics, what follows is the complete, official, first edition, Dutch text of the Remonstrance of 1610 (from Philip Schaff's *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. III, pp. 545-549).

Arminianism teaches God determined to save those who would believe on Christ and persevere in faith and obedience. "Art. I That God, by an eternal, unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ His Son, before the foundation of the world, hath determined, out of the fallen, sinful race of men, to save in Christ, for Christ's sake, and through Christ, those who, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, shall believe on this His Son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith, through this grace, even to the end; and, on the other hand, to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving in sin and under wrath, and to condemn them as alienated from Christ, according to the word of the gospel in John iii:36: 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him,' and according to other passages of scripture also."

Arminianism teaches that Christ died for all men. "Art. II That, agreeably thereto, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he hath obtained for them all, by his death on the cross, redemption and the forgiveness of sins; yet that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins except the believer, according to the word of the Gospel of John iii:16: 'God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And in the first epistle of John ii:2: 'And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.'"

Arminianism teaches man cannot save himself. "Art. III That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free will, inasmuch as he, in the state of apostasy and sin, and of and by himself neither think, will, nor do anything that is truly good (such as saving Faith eminently is); but it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through His Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good, according to the word of Christ, John XV. 5: 'Without me ye can do nothing.'"

Arminianism teaches grace can be resisted. "Art. IV That this grace of God is the beginning, continuance, and accomplishment of all good, even to this extent, that the regenerate man himself, without prevenient or assisting, awakening, following and co-operative grace, can neither think, will, nor do good, nor withstand any temptation to evil; so that all good deeds or movements that can be conceived, must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ. But as respects the mode of the operation of this grace, it is not irresistible, in as much as it is written concerning many that they have resisted the Holy Ghost. Acts vii., and elsewhere in many places."

Arminianism teaches whether or not men can lose their salvation is yet to be determined. "Art. V That those who are incorporated into Christ by true faith, and have thereby become partakers of His life-giving Spirit, have thereby full power to strive against Satan, sin, the world, and their own flesh, and to win the victory; it being well understood that it is ever through the assisting grace of the Holy Ghost; and that Jesus Christ assists them through his Spirit in all temptations, extends to them his hand, and if only they are ready for the conflict, and desire his help, and are not inactive, keep them from falling, so that they, by no craft or power of Satan can be misled nor plucked out of Christ's hands, according to the Word of Christ, John X. 28; 'Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.' But whether they are capable, through negligence, of forsaking again the first beginnings of their life in Christ, of again returning to this present evil world, of turning away from the holy doctrine which was delivered them, of losing a good conscience, of becoming devoid of grace, that must be more particularly determined out of the Holy Scriptures, before we ourselves can teach it with the full persuasion of our minds.

"These Articles, thus set forth and taught, the Remonstrants deem agreeable to the Word of God, tending to edification, and, as regards this argument, sufficient for salvation, so that it is not necessary or edifying to rise higher or descend deeper."

Schaff summarizes the remonstrance as follows: 1) Election and condemnation are based on foreknowledge of the faith and unbelief of man (Conditional Predestination). 2) Christ died for all men (Universal Atonement). Schaff explains the Arminian position when he says, "The immediate effect of Christ's death was not the salvation, but only the solvability of sinners by the removal of the legal obstacles, and opening the door for pardon and reconciliation" (Schaff, vol. I, p. 518). 3) Man is unable to accomplish anything truly

good and therefore is unable to attain to saving faith unless he is regenerated by the Holy Spirit. 4) Grace is resistible (Resistible Grace). 5). Grace is sufficient to preserve the faithful, but it has not yet been proven from the Scriptures that grace, once given, can never be lost (Schaff, vol. I, pp. 516-519).

Erickson points out that later Arminians, such as Wesley, concluded that the universal invitation to salvation means that all are able to believe or to meet the conditions of salvation. This is possible because of "prevenient" grace; that is, since God gives grace to all men, everyone is capable of accepting the offer of salvation. There is no special application of the grace of God to specific individuals (Erickson, pp. 919-920).

Schaff explains that "the disciples of Arminius went further and taught the possibility of a total and final fall of believers from grace. They appealed to such passages where believers are warned against this very danger and to such examples as Solomon and Judas. They moreover denied, with the Roman Catholics, that anybody can have a certainty of salvation except by special revelation" (Schaff, vol. I, p. 519).

Arminianism can be summarized as belief in 1) Conditional Predestination, 2) Universal Atonement, 3) (originally: Incapable Depravity) Capable Depravity, 4) Resistible Grace, and 5) (originally: security undetermined) Conditional Security.

The Historical Development

After several hundred years of the Sacramental system dominating the theology of the Roman Catholic Church, several within the church began to protest. They wanted to reform the church. The three main reformers were Martin Luther in Germany, Huldreich Zwingli in Zurich, and John Calvin in Geneva. There were others, of course, but these three are generally considered the three major reformers. A brief review of these men will serve as a helpful introduction to the systems of salvation that were fully developed later.

Martin Luther The story begins with Martin Luther (1483-1546), who was born on November 10, 1483. Even though he was born of peasant stock, Martin attended the University of Erfurt, where he studied law. In 1501, he began the study of Aristotle under the influence of teachers who followed the nominalism of William of Ockham (1285-1349). William had taught that Scripture was the only guide in matters of faith. This exposure to William's concepts made Luther aware of the need for divine intervention. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1503 and a Master of Arts in 1505.

Although his father wanted him to study law, Luther ended up in the priesthood because of a thunderstorm. In 1505, a severe thunderstorm terrified Luther. He promised St. Anne he would become a monk if he were spared. Two weeks later, he entered an Augustinian monastery at Erfurt. He was ordained in 1507.

In 1511, Luther was transferred to Wittenberg. It was here that he received his doctorate of theology. He became professor of Bible and held the position of lecturer in biblical theology until his death.

During his early days at Wittenberg, Luther gradually developed the idea that the only true authority was the Scripture. He lectured on the Psalms (1513-1515) and Romans (1515-1517). Between 1512 and 1516, a reading of Romans 1:17 convinced him that only faith in Christ could make one just before God. As a result, he found the peace that he had not been able to find anywhere else. *Sola fide* (faith alone) and *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) became the main points in his theological system.

In 1517, the Catholic preacher Johann Tetzel began selling indulgences near Wittenberg. Tetzel taught that indulgences gave complete forgiveness for all sins. Luther decided to make a public protest. On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther tacked his famous 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. Those 95 Theses simply criticized the abuses of the indulgence system. This is the date often used as the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. As a result of the publication of the Theses, Tetzel attempted to silence Luther, but to no avail. Among others, the Augustinian order of priests supported Luther.

Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560) came to Wittenberg as a professor of Greek in 1518. At the time, he was only 21 years old. In the years to come, he and other faculty members at Wittenberg would be loyal supporters of Luther. Melanchthon, particularly, would be a valuable ally, becoming the theologian of the Reformation.

In 1520, Luther wrote three pamphlets. One, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation,* challenged the authority of the Pope. Another, *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, challenged the sacramental system, that is, the sacraments as a means of grace when dispensed by a priest. Luther affirmed the validity of only the Lord's Supper and Baptism in this pamphlet. *On the Freedom of a Christian Man*, the third pamphlet asserted that as a result of their personal faith in Christ, all believers are priests before God. In these three pamphlets, Luther attacked the hierarchy, the sacraments, and the theology of the Roman Catholic Church. He was also appealing to the German people for reformation.

In June of 1520, Pope Leo X issued the bull, which eventually resulted in Luther's excommunication (1521). On December 10, 1520, Luther publicly burned Leo's bull. [A "bull" is an official papal letter or document. The name is derived from the lead seal (bulla) affixed to such documents.]

In the spring of 1521, the new emperor, Charles V, issued a summons for an imperial diet (an official assembly) at the city of Worms. Luther was summoned to appear to answer for his views. He appealed to Scripture at Worms, saying, "Here I stand. I can do no other. May God help me." No harm came to Luther because he had gone to Worms with the assurance of protection by Frederick, the founder of the University at Wittenberg, and other German noblemen.

Also, in 1521, Melanchthon published *Loci Communes* (Common Places), the first major theological treatise of the Reformation. This book, written in Latin, established Melanchthon as the theologian of the Lutheran movement. This work grew out of his study of the book of Romans. In it, he pictured man as bound by sin, unable to help himself. God must initiate the work of salvation, which is received by faith in Christ.

In 1525, Luther married a former nun named Katherine. They had six children. In 1530, the Diet of Augsburg approved the Augsburg Confession, a creed written by Melanchthon with Luther's approval. It became the official creed of the Lutheran Church.

Zwingli Huldreich Zwingli (1484-1531), the second major first-generation reformer, attended the University of Vienna and the University of Basel, where in 1504 he received a Bachelor of Arts degree and in 1506 a Master of Arts. Zwingli was a Catholic priest who, between 1506 and 1516, served as a priest and chaplain. In 1519, he became a pastor in Zurich. In the same year, he experienced conversion as a result of coming in contact with Lutheran ideas. In 1522, he was secretly married to a widow named Anna Reinhard. It was not until 1524 that they were married publicly. They had four children.

Zwingli's *Sixty-Seven Articles* (1523) taught the authority of Scripture, the headship of Christ in the church, justification by faith, and the right of the clergy to marry.

In the fall of 1529, Luther and Zwingli met at the Marburg Castle of Philip of Hesse. They agreed on almost everything. Their disagreement was on how Christ was present in communion. Luther argued that although the substance of bread and wine did not change, Christ was a real physical presence in the elements; that is, the bread and the wine do not change, but a real physical presence is around and under the symbols. Zwingli contended that communion was a memorial. As a result of this meeting, Zwingli lost the support of Luther and Zwinglianism developed separately from Lutheranism.

While serving as a chaplain, Zwingli was killed in a battle with the Catholics in 1531. Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575) was Zwingli's successor. In 1549, the Zwinglian forces merged with the Calvinistic forces in the Reformed churches in Switzerland.

John Calvin John Calvin (1509-1564) led the second generation of reformers. He created and systematized the Reformed tradition within Protestantism. Calvin was born at Noyon in Picardy in northeastern France. He studied for a time at the University of Paris, where his cousin, Pierre Oliver, introduced him to Luther's teachings. "Lutheranism strongly influenced Calvin's doctrine" (*Eerdmans'*, p. 381). After the University of Paris, he studied law at the University of Orleans. In 1529, he transferred to the University of Bourges. About 1533, when Calvin was 25 years old, he experienced what he later called a "sudden conversion" and adopted the ideas of the Reformation.

In 1536, while at Basel, at the age of 27, Calvin published his first edition of *The Institutes of Christian Religion.* Later that same year, he went to Geneva, where he was ordained as a teaching minister. Except for a short period of exile in Strasbourg between 1538 and 1541, he spent the rest of his life in Geneva. While in Strasbourg, he published his commentary on the book of Romans (1539). In 1540, he married the widow of an Anabaptist pastor named Idelette de Bure; they had one son who died in infancy. Idelette died in 1549. Calvin himself died in 1564.

John Calvin did something the other Reformers did not do. He wrote the first systematic theology, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The word "institutes" is a translation of the Latin word *institutio*. A more meaningful translation would be "instruction." The first edition of the *Institutes* (1536) was a small book that dealt mainly with the Ten Commandments, the Apostle's Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. Augustine used this structure in *Enchiridion* (421), which is often called by its subtitle *On Faith* (The Apostle's Creed), *Hope* (The Lord's Prayer), and *Love* (The Ten Commandments). The same structure was also used by Aquinas in his *Compendium of Theology* (1273) and by Luther in his *Smaller Catechism* (1529). Calvin's *Institutes* went through a dozen revisions and editions. The last edition (1559) had grown from six chapters to eighty, and the organizing principle became the Apostle's Creed: God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the church.

In the *Institutes* and his other works, John Calvin wrote about a number of issues concerning theology in general and the doctrines concerning salvation in particular. What Calvin said about various aspects of salvation laid the foundation for what came to be known as Calvinism. At the same time, some of what he taught was altered by those who followed him. Thus, it is important to understand exactly what Calvin taught.

R. T. Kendall, a minister from the United States, wrote a Ph.D. dissertation submitted to Oxford University entitled *The Nature of Saving Faith from William Perkins (d. 1602) to the Westminster Assembly (1643-1649)*. He was the pastor of Westminster Chapel in

London (1977-2002), the former church of Martin Lloyd-Jones. In 1979, his dissertation was published by Oxford University Press under the title *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*. In it, Kendall traces the development of the Calvinistic system of salvation to the point that it was embodied in the Westminster Confession of Faith. While the following material, especially the information concerning Beza, Perkins, and Ames, can be documented independently of Kendall, it will depend heavily on his research.

1. Predestination. Calvin taught double predestination, which is the election of some to salvation and the election of others to damnation. He wrote, "To many, this seems a perplexing subject because they deem it most incongruous that of the great body of mankind some should be predestined to salvation, and others to destruction" (Calvin, *Institutes*, III. XXI. 1).

"The predestination by which God adopts some to the hope of life, and adjudges others to eternal death, no man who will be thought pious ventures simply to deny; but it is greatly caviled at, especially by those who make prescience (foreknowledge) its cause. We, indeed, ascribe both prescience and predestination to God, but we say that it is absurd to make the latter subordinate to the former" (Calvin, *Institutes*, III. XXI. 5).

2. Atonement. It is generally assumed that Calvin taught a doctrine later called Limited Atonement, that is, that Christ did not die for all mankind, but only for the elect. No less than B. B. Warfield, the famous Princeton professor who was a Calvinist, said that there was nothing in the Westminster Confession "which is not to be found expressly set forth in the writings of John Calvin" (Warfield, p. 148). J. I. Packer, another respected scholar, wrote that the Synod of Dort formula of Limited Atonement states what Calvin "would have said had he faced the Arminian thesis" (Packer, p. 151).

It is doubtful, however, that Calvin taught Limited Atonement. Statements in his commentaries clearly indicate his belief in Unlimited Atonement. For example, in his commentary on Isaiah 53:12, speaking of Christ, he said, "He alone bore the punishment of many because on Him was laid the guilt of the whole world. It is evident from other passages, especially from the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, that 'many' sometimes denotes 'all'". (This and the quotes that follow are from a reprint of the Pringle edition of *Calvin's Commentaries*, translated by William Pringle. Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Publishers, 1948). On Mark 14:24, Calvin wrote, "By the word *many* he means not a part of the world only but the whole human race." Concerning the statement, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" in John 1:29, Calvin said, "And when he says 'the sins of the world,' he extends this favor indiscriminately to the whole human race; that the Jews might not think that he had been sent to them alone." In his comments on Romans 5:18, Calvin says, "Though Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world, and is offered through God's benignity indiscriminately to all, yet all do not receive him."

Moise Amyraut, a highly respected seventeenth-century French scholar and theologian, claimed that Calvin did not teach Limited Atonement. Because of his views, particularly on predestination, the French Catholic Church tried Amyraut for heresy in 1637. After extensive research in the original sources, Brian G. Armstrong, who holds a Doctorate in Theology from Princeton Theology Seminary, wrote a scholarly book called *Calvinism and The Amyraut Heresy*. In it, he demonstrates that Amyraut was closer to Calvin than his accusers. Amyraut cited Calvin's comment on 2 Peter 3:9 to support his claim that Calvin believed in a universal design for the atonement (Armstrong, p. 166).

Furthermore, Calvin wrote a book called *Acta Synodi Tridentinae, cum antidoto* (1547) to refute the Council of Trent point by point, but when he came to the decree which affirmed that Christ died for all men, he stated that he had no comment. (For a more detailed discussion of Calvin's view of Unlimited Atonement, see Kendall, pp. 13-18 and M. Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology*, pp. 13-18.)

3. Faith. After a great deal of discussion about faith, Calvin defines it as "a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favor toward us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ, and revealed to our minds, and sealed on our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Calvin, *Institutes*, III, ii, 7). In the discussion, he insists that faith is not "assent to the gospel history, nor does it just have God as its object. True faith embraces the mercy that our heavenly Father has been pleased to succor us through Christ "and with firm hope rest in it" (Calvin, *Institutes*, III. II. 1). Faith consists "in knowledge—knowledge not of God merely, but of the divine will." We obtain salvation "when we recognize God as a propitious Father through the reconciliation made by Christ and Christ as given to us for righteousness, sanctification, and life" (Calvin, *Institutes*, III. II. 2). "The true knowledge of Christ consists in receiving him as he is offered by the father—namely, as invested with his Gospel. Therein are certainly unfolded to us treasures of grace. There is an inseparable relation between faith and the word." "Corresponding with this, the Evangelists uniformly employ the terms believers and disciples as synonymous. We now see, therefore, that faith is the knowledge of the divine will in regard to us, as ascertained from his word. And the foundation of it is a previous persuasion of the truth of God. Nor is it sufficient to believe that God is true, and cannot lie or deceive unless you feel firmly persuaded, every word which proceeds from him is sacred, inviolable truth (Calvin, *Institutes*, III. II. 6). Calvin also says, "We must exclude a knowledge mingled with doubt—a knowledge which is so far from being firm, is continually wavering" (Calvin, *Institutes*, II. II. 7).

For Calvin, faith is firm and sure knowledge, understanding, persuasion, and being firmly persuaded. As compared to other definitions and descriptions of faith, Calvin's seems passive. In fact, later in the *Institutes*, he says, "For, in regard to justification, faith is merely passive, bring nothing of our own to procure the favor of God, but receiving from Christ everything that we want" (Calvin, *Institutes*, III, XIII, 5). Kendall concludes that Calvin defines faith as "intellectual, passive, and assuring" (Kendall, p. 19).

4. Temporary Faith. According to Calvin, it is possible to believe without having faith, which only the pious have. He says, "Multitudes undoubtedly believe that God is, and admit the truth of the gospel history, and the other parts of Scripture, in the same way in which they believe the records of past events or events which they have actually witnessed. There are some who go even farther: they regard the word of God as an infallible oracle; they do not altogether disregard its precepts, but are moved to some degree by its threatenings and promises" (Calvin, *Institutes*, III. II. 9). "Simon Magus is said to have believed, though he soon after gave proof of his unbelief (Acts 8:13-18)." He had "some kind of assent, and so far acknowledged Christ to be the author of life and salvation, as willingly to assume his name." Calvin points to the parable of the sower where some are said to "believe for a while" (Calvin, *Institutes*, III. II. 10; see also his commentary on Heb. 6:4). Calvin even says that "experience shows that the reprobate are sometimes affected in a way so similar to the elect, that even in their judgment there is no difference between them" (Calvin, *Institutes*, III. II. 11). He calls this a "temporary faith," a "fading faith," and goes so far as to say that this is "an inferior operation of the Spirit" in the reprobate and

that "the reprobate believes God to be propitious to them, inasmuch as they accept the gift of reconciliation." He does not "deny that God illumines their minds to this extent, that they recognize his grace" (Calvin, *Institutes,* III. II. 11).

In other words, according to Calvin, it is possible for the Holy Spirit to illumine a person's mind to the extent that the individual recognizes God's grace and the person responds with "faith" (although it is not worthy of the name) and yet be unregenerate! Speaking of Calvin's doctrine of temporary faith, Kendall says, "Regrettably, he seems not to have anticipated the dilemma this teaching could create. Much less could he have known that a tradition would emerge that would have incorporated his teaching and try to solve the problem he raises by a voluntaristic doctrine of faith (that is, faith as an act of the will). His own effort to solve the problem is less than satisfactory; had he fully perceived the pastoral implications he raised, he might have shown how his doctrine of faith could be retained without appealing to man's will as the ultimate ground of assurance" (Kendall, p. 22). "If the reprobate may believe that God is merciful toward them, how can *we* be sure our believing the same thing is any different from theirs?" (Kendall, p. 24).

5. Repentance. For Calvin in the *ordo salutis* (the order of salvation), faith precedes repentance. He says, "That repentance not only always follows faith, but is produced by it, ought to be without controversy. Those who think that repentance precedes faith, instead of flows from, or being produced by it, as the fruit by the tree, have never understood its nature, and are moved to adopt that view on very insufficient grounds" (Calvin, *Institutes*, III. III. 1). "We only wish to show that a man cannot seriously engage in repentance unless he knows that he is of God. But no man is truly persuaded that he is of God until he has embraced his offered favor" (Calvin, *Institutes*, III. III. 2). Kendall explains, "It is vital to Calvin's doctrine of faith that men are to take no comfort from the 'fruits' of regeneration 'unless they *first* apprehend God's goodness, sealed by nothing else than the certainty of the promise.' The reason Calvin feels so strongly about this is because he thinks "a man cannot apply himself seriously to repentance without knowing himself to belong to God'. Moreover, 'no one is truly persuaded that he belongs to God unless he has first recognized God's grace'" (Kendall, p. 26).

6. Assurance. Nevertheless, Calvin believed that one could have the assurance of salvation. Indeed, his very definition of faith included assurance. (Faith is "firm and sure knowledge," "understanding," "persuasion," being "firmly persuaded.") When discussing temporary faith, Calvin speaks of "assurance of faith" and says, "The elect alone have full assurance" (Calvin, *Institutes*, III. II. 11). Kendall says, "The one thing above all else which Calvin emphasizes is that we must never look to ourselves for assurance. When Calvin uses the word *faith,* he means assurance of saving faith, salvation, eternal life, or election. The later distinction between faith and assurance seems never to have entered Calvin's mind. Assurance to Calvin comes by what would later be called the *direct* act of faith. Calvin's doctrine of assurance may be put in one sentence. Appealing to Ephesians 1:4, he says: 'but if we have been chosen in Him we shall not find assurance of our election in ourselves; and not even in God the Father, if we conceive Him as severed from his Son Christ, then, is the mirror wherein we must and without self-deception may contemplate our own election.' He thinks Christ's death is a sufficient pledge and merely seeing Him is assuring. Calvin consistently urges men not to look to themselves. Indeed, 'if you contemplate yourself, that is sure damnation' (III. ii. 24). For if men begin to judge whether they are regenerate 'by good works, nothing will be more uncertain or feeble.' Moreover, 'when

the Christian looks at himself he can only have grounds for anxiety, indeed despair' [Comm. I Cor. 1:9]. We should not seek assurance by 'conjecture' for faith corresponds 'to a simple and free promise;' hence, 'no place for doubting is left' [III ii 38]" (Kendall, pp. 24-26). Kendall concludes his discussion of Calvin's view of assurance by saying, "Therefore, if we want to know we are in the number of the elect, we must be *persuaded* that Christ died for us. We know this by a direct act of faith. This is why Calvin can affirm: 'If Pighius [a Catholic theologian] asks how can I know I am elect, I answer that Christ is more than a thousand testimonies to me'" (Kendall, p. 28).

After Calvin's death, several men contributed to what later became Calvinism and what others reacted to to form Arminianism. Several of those men and their ideas will be considered next.

Theodore Beza Theodore Beza (1519-1605), who succeeded Calvin at Geneva, was trained as a lawyer. In 1548, he went to Geneva, where he announced that he had become a Protestant. He became a professor of Greek at Lausanne University. In 1559, he became the first rector of the Geneva Academy, which later became the University of Geneva. Beza edited a Greek New Testament, which was used as a source for the Geneva Bible and the King James Bible. "Under his leadership, Geneva became the center of Reformed Protestantism" (Eerdmans', p. 382). He succeeded Calvin and, theologically, went beyond Calvin.

1. Predestination. Beza "lifts the doctrine of predestination to a prominence which it did not have for Calvin." He makes it "an end in itself" (Bangs, p. 66). Or, as another has said, he makes the doctrine of predestination "central" to his theological system (Kendall, p. 30).

He also refines the doctrine of predestination beyond his predecessor. There is no explicit discussion of an order of Decrees in Calvin (Bangs, p. 66). Beza, however, concludes that the Decree of Predestination preceded the Decree of Creation. He interprets Romans 9:21 to mean that God decided to predestine some to salvation and others to damnation *before* He determined to create mankind. Romans 9:21 says, "Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?" Concerning this verse, Beza says "by the term 'lump' there is manifestly indicated a substance as yet unshapen" and "in likening God to a potter and mankind to a lump of clay out of which vessels are afterward to be made, without a doubt the Apostle betokens the first creation of men" (Beza, *A Booke of Christian Questions and Answers*, p.84-85, cited by Bangs, p. 67). In other words, he concludes that God, as the potter, determined which vessel would be a vessel of honor and which vessel would be a dishonor before He made it because Paul used the word lump, indicating that the vessel was not yet formed.

Beza's order of the Decree later became known as Supralapsarianism. Apparently, the terms Supralapsarianism, Sublapsarianism, and Infralapsarianism did not appear until shortly after the Synod of Dort (1618-1619; Bangs, p. 67). The *word* lapsarian refers to one who believes man is fallen (lapse = fall), but *lapsarianism* is concerned primarily with the *logical order of God's Decrees.* The question is, "Did God decide to predestine some to salvation before or after He created and allowed the fall?" Supralapsarianism says God first decreed to save some and condemn others. Then, He decided to create, allow the fall, and provide salvation for the elect. Infralapsarianism says God decreed to create, allow the fall, and then, He decided to elect and provide salvation for the elect. Sublapsarianism claims

that God determined to create, allow the fall, provide salvation for all, and then, elected some to be saved. The details of the three positions look like this:

Supralapsarianism ("supra" means "above," that is, before the fall)

1. Decree to elect some to salvation and others to damnation
2. Decree to create
3. Decree to permit the fall
4. Decree to provide salvation for the elect

Infralapsarianism ("infra" means "below," that is, after the fall)

1. Decree to create
2. Decree to permit the fall
3. Decree to elect some to salvation and pass by others
4. Decree to provide salvation for the elect

Sublapsarianism ("sub" means "under," that is, after the fall)

1. Decree to create
2. Decree to permit the fall
3. Decree to provide salvation for all
4. Decree to elect some to salvation

Supralapsarianism not only puts election *before* the fall, but it also says that God elected some to be saved and others to be damned. The implication is that God created the human race and allowed the fall so that He would have sinners to save and sinners to condemn. By placing the Decree to elect before the Decree to provide salvation, Supralapsarianism infers that salvation is only provided for the elect. The inescapable conclusion is that Christ died only for the elect. Shedd points out that, in this concept, "Man is contemplated as creatable, not created. In other words, the Decree has no real object. What is elected in an abstract concept is a non-entity. Yet the Scripture indicates that God elects created beings. For example, Romans 9:18 says, 'He has mercy on *whom* He wills, and *whom* He wills He hardens'" (Shedd, vol. I, pp. 442-443).

By placing the Decrees to create and to allow the fall before the Decree to elect, Infralapsarianism implies that God provided salvation because of the fall and not that He caused man to fall so that He would have sinners to save. Furthermore, by placing the Decree to elect before the Decree to provide salvation, Infralapsarianism, like Supralapsarianism, infers that salvation is provided only for the elect; both teach Limited Atonement.

In placing the Decree to elect after the Decree to provide salvation, Sublapsarianism implies that salvation has been provided for the whole world and that God has elected some to be saved.

Calvinists hold all three Lapsarian positions. The Supralapsarian view is sometimes referred to as extreme or Hyper-Calvinism. Some theologians do not distinguish between infralapsarianism and sublapsarianism. The whole Lapsarian controversy is more a matter of speculation than revelation.

2. Atonement. As we have seen, if the decision to predestine came before the decision to create, logically, Christ died only for the elect. Beza does not use the word "limited" in

relation to the atonement, but as Kendall says, "Beza logically works out his system so that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of the elect; the reprobate have no Redeemer according to this scheme—neither to begin nor to end with" (Kendall, p. 31).

3. The place of the Law. For Beza, the role of the Law in conversion is vitally important. The Law is preparation for faith. He says, "The 'first use of the Law is to show us our sins, make us sorry, and to humble and throw down ourselves to the uttermost.' It also kindles 'the first point of repentance'" (Kendall, p. 37).

4. Repentance. If the Law is to be preached first for producing a change in us, Beza is implying that repentance precedes faith. Thus, Beza reverses Calvin's order of faith and repentance. According to Kendall, "There is nothing in Calvin's doctrine that suggests, even in the process of regeneration, that man must be prepared at all—including by the works of the law prior to faith. He allows that the law *can* have the effects of preparing men 'to seek what previously they did not realize they lacked,' that this assertion comes in the context of a discussion that suggests such is but an accidental effect of the law." Kendall argues that Calvin's position concerning repentance "rules out any preparation for faith on man's part." In Kendall's words, Calvin felt, "We cannot turn to God or do anything that pertains to obedience until first we have been *given* faith" (Kendall, p. 26, italics his; see Calvin, *Institute*s, II, vii, 6ff). Indeed, Calvin himself wrote, "Away, then, with all the absurd trifling which many have indulged in with regard to preparation" (Calvin, *Institute*s, II. II. 27).

5. Faith. According to Beza, since Christ died only for the elect, it is not enough to just believe that Christ came to save sinners; rather, one must "particularly apply" Christ to oneself. As Kendall points out, this is another departure from Calvin. For Calvin, faith is persuasion, but while Beza calls faith "a certain knowledge," he does not let the definition end there. According to him, one must "persuade himself certainly." Kendall goes on to say, "What Beza does not do is to point men to Christ; he points men instead to faith. If they conclude they have faith, then they may conclude that they have Christ. To Calvin, looking to Christ is faith; Calvin could point men directly to Christ since Christ died for all. Beza begins not with Christ but with faith." Although Beza never says so, his position implies that faith is an act of the will (Kendall, pp. 33-34). This is the seed of voluntarism, the notion that faith is an act of the will instead of, as with Calvin, a passive persuasion in the mind (see Kendall, p. 35 for more about Beza's voluntarism).

6. Temporary Faith. Beza said reprobates are sometimes affected by a "calling ineffectual" (Kendall, p. 36). These reprobates who have a temporary faith "are a little moved with some taste of the heavenly gift so that for the time they seem to have received the seed, and to be planted in the Church of God, and also show the way of salvation to others" (Kendall, p. 36). Kendall remarks that the doctrine of temporary faith "poses serious problems for a theology which posits that one must verify his faith by good works." He goes on to point out that for Beza, the unregenerate may have similar experiences as a regenerate person, such as striving against lust, sorrow for sin, and good works, yet these are different than those same things experienced by a child of God. To complicate matters, Beza "does not state what the differences are." The problem, according to Kendall, is how the believer's experience can give comfort if the reprobate can have such similar works (Kendall, p. 36). Beza's final solution is that true believers persevere in holiness (Kendall, p. 37).

7. Assurance. Beza's doctrine of Christ dying only for the elect has practical implications for the assurance of salvation. Kendall says, "We have no pledge, as it were, that we are elected: for we have no way of knowing whether we are one of those for whom Christ died. Had Christ died for all, we could freely know we are elected. But Beza has told us Christ died for the elect. This makes trusting Christ's death presumptuous, if not dangerous: we could be putting our trust in One who did not die for us and therefore be damned. Thus, we can no more trust Christ's death by a direct act of faith than we can infallibly project that we are among the number chosen from eternity: for the number for the elect and the number for whom Christ died are one and the same. The ground of assurance, then, must be sought elsewhere than in Christ" (Kendall, p. 32).

Kendall explains that the Calvinistic tradition developed something called the "practical syllogism," which he defines as "drawing a conclusion by reflecting upon oneself" (Kendall, p. 8). Apparently, Zacharias Ursinus (1516-1590), one of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), coined the term (Kendall, p. 8, fn. 9). Beza, evidently, did not use the term, but he employed the technique as the basis of assurance. He used it in two ways: "by reflecting upon the fact of having believed, or by reflecting upon the appearances of sanctification or repentance in oneself" (Kendall, pp. 8-9).

In his chapter on Beza, Kendall says Beza's solution to the problem of assurance is "we look within ourselves" (Kendall, p. 32). He points out that "Beza asserts that one should 'conclude with himself I am in Jesus Christ by faith, and therefore I cannot perish but am sure of my salvation.'" Kendall explains, "For the *knowledge* of faith is the 'conclusion' deduced by the effects. It is as though Beza says: all who have the effects have faith; but I have the effects, therefore (the infallible conclusion) I have faith. It seems then that it is not faith that assures but the conclusion that proves that faith is there" (Kendall, p. 33, italics his).

There is more. According to Beza, we not only look to ourselves to see faith, but we also look to ourselves to see sanctification or good works. He wrote, "When Satan puts us in doubt of our election, we may not search first the resolution in the eternal council of God whose majesty we cannot comprehend, but on the contrary, we must begin at the sanctification which we feel in ourselves for as much as our sanctification from whence proceeds good works, is a certain effect of faith or rather of Jesus Christ dwelling in us by faith." In another of his writings, Beza asks, "Whereby may a man know whether he has faith or not?" He answers, "By good works." Kendall remarks, "Thus, while Calvin thinks looking to ourselves leads to anxiety or sure damnation, Beza thinks otherwise" (Kendall, p. 33). Beza not only looks to himself instead of Christ for assurance, but he has also separated faith and assurance.

Appealing to 2 Peter 1:10, Beza says that "good works bring testimony to our conscience that Jesus Christ dwells in us, and consequently we cannot perish, being elected to salvation" (Kendall, p. 37).

Concerning Beza, the biographer of Arminius said, "It is characteristic of Beza to take a position of Calvin's, fasten on a different facet of it, and throw it into stark, isolated prominence where it can be only accepted or rejected, but not softened" (Bangs, p. 68). Beza has a reputation for being rigid and harsh (Bangs, p. 75).

William Perkins According to Kendall, while others contributed to the process, William Perkins (1558-1602) was a major figure in the development of the Calvinistic system of salvation. Perkins received a BA from Cambridge in 1581, an MA in 1584, and became an

author as well as a pastor. By the end of the sixteenth century, he was one of England's most popular authors of religious works, even surpassing Calvin and Beza. He also became a popular author on the Continent. He has been called "the greatest of the sixteenth-century Puritan theologians" and "the prince of the Puritan theologians" (Kendall, pp.51-53). Bangs says that he "was perhaps the first important English theologian since the Reformation" (Bangs, p. 207). He has been called "the Calvin of England."

Perkins' book *A Golden Chaine* contains a systematic treatment of his theology. On the title page, he gives credit to Beza for "the order of the causes of Salvation and Damnation" (Kendall, pp. 54-55). His writings contain what is probably the first occurrence in English theology of the word "limited" concerning Christ's death for the elect (Kendall, p. 58, fn. 1). But his major concern was to show that people must make their calling and election sure to themselves (Kendall, p. 54). In 1589, Perkins published what was to become his first major work, entitled *A Treatise tending unto a declaration whether a man be in the estate of damnation or in the estate of grace: and if he be in the first, how he may in time come out of it: if in the second, how he may discern it, and preserve in the same to the end.* So within the overall theological framework of Double Predestination and Limited Atonement, Perkins' ultimate concern is the assurance of salvation.

1. Predestination. According to Perkins, predestination has two parts: Election, "whereby on his own free will, he [God] has ordained certain men to salvation, to the praise of the glory of his grace" and Reprobation, "whereby God, according to the most free and just purpose of his will, has determined to reject certain men unto eternal destruction, and misery, and that to the praise of his justice." Like Calvin and Beza, Perkins taught double predestination (Kendall, p. 57).

2. Atonement. Perkins followed Beza in teaching Limited Atonement. He said the death of Christ was a "ransom for the sins of the elect" (Kendall, p.57). He also said that the death of Christ was "limited to the elect alone," which was probably the first time in English theology the word "limited" was used concerning Christ's death for the elect (Kendall, p. 58, fn. 1).

3. The Place of the Law. According to Perkins, preaching should begin with the Law, "showing a man his sin and the punishment thereof." Kendall explains that in Perkins' view, "When God brings men to Christ, 'first, he prepares their hearts, that they might be capable of faith.' This preparation is by 'bruising them' or 'humbling them,' and this humiliation is accomplished by giving them 'sight' and 'sorrow' for their sins. It is the function of the law to prepare such a sorrow." Again, Perkins is following Beza and not Calvin "by propounding the need for the law to precede the gospel in bringing men to Christ" (Kendall, pp. 59-60).

4. Faith. According to Kendall, Perkins vacillates between Calvin and Beza when it comes to a definition of faith. On the one hand, he retains Calvin's concept of faith as apprehension, persuasion, or assurance and, on the other, he also retains Beza's view of faith involving appropriating or applying (Kendall, pp. 61-62).

For Perkins, there are five degrees of faith. The five are: 1) General faith, the knowledge of the Gospel, 2) the hope of pardon, that is, believing one's sins are pardonable, 3) a hungering after Christ's grace, 4) flying from the terror of the Law to the throne of grace, and 5) persuasion by the Holy Spirit whereby a man applies to himself the promises made in the gospel (Kendall, p. 64).

5. Temporary Faith. Perkins also sets forth five degrees of the ineffectual calling of the reprobate. The first is the enlightening of the mind, whereby the Holy Spirit instructs the understanding and knowledge of the Word. The second degree is a certain kind of penitence, which includes acknowledging sin, being pricked with the feeling of God's wrath for sin, being grieved for the punishment for sin, confessing sin, acknowledging God to be just in punishing sin, desiring to be saved and promising repentance. The third degree is temporary faith. The fourth is to taste of the heavenly gift, and the fifth is a zeal in the profession of religion. The reprobate may love God, have great outward holiness, and may amend and reform his life after sinning. He may even be able to interpret and expound the Scripture by the gift of prophecy and, therefore, be a preacher of the Word (Kendall, pp. 68-73).

6. Assurance. If a reprobate can do all of that, how do people know if they are saved or lost? Kendall says, "Perkins devoted himself primarily to showing men that they must, and how they can make their calling and election sure to themselves. This was Perkins' ultimate concern" (Kendall, p. 54). In the first place, Perkins says, "The reprobate *generally in a confused manner* believes that Christ is a Savior of some men: and he neither can nor desires to come to the particular application of Christ. The elect believes that Christ is a Savior of him particularly."

Perkins also says this application is "when a man is verily persuaded by the Holy Spirit, of God's favor toward him particularly, and the forgiveness of his own sins." However, the essence of his doctrine of assurance is his dependence upon what Kendall calls "the practical syllogism." In the words of Perkins himself, "Although this particular expression, *I am elected*, is not expressly set down in the scriptures, yet it is inclusively comprehended in them, as the Species in his Genus, as the Logicians speak: so that it may by just consequence be gathered out of God's word, if we reason thus: they which truly believe are elected, John 6:35. I believe; for he which believes does know himself to believe; therefore, I am elected. The first proposition is taken from the scripture: the second, from the believer's conscience, and from them both, the conclusion is easily derived." In other words, Perkins believes that knowledge of election is not by revelation but through the practical syllogism. As Kendall remarks, "It appears that the elect alone have the ability to reason this way" (Kendall, pp. 70-71).

Second Peter 1:10 is a critical passage for Perkins. It is printed in bold print on the title page of *Whether a Man* and is at the head of the list of verses printed on the title page of his other works (Kendall, p. 8). Calvin never appeals to 2 Peter 1:10 for assurance of salvation (Kendall, p. 25). Beza, however, does. Based on that verse, he says that "good works bring testimony to our conscience that Jesus Christ dwells in us, and, consequently, we cannot perish, being elected to salvation" (Kendall, p. 37). Again, Perkins follows Beza. Kendall says, "Perkins' sole advice to the doubting Christian is embodied in 2 Peter 1:10. Perkins claims that 2 Peter 1:10 means 'nothing else but to practice the virtues of the moral law.'" At this point in his discussion, Kendall points out that Perkins claims that repentance follows faith. He goes on to say, "This is Calvin's order, but when Perkins makes a change of life the ground of assurance, he reverses the practical order Calvin intends. For Perkins says that the assurance of the pardon of sin is upon the 'condition' of man's repentance" (Kendall, p. 74).

As Kendall explains, Perkins mixes Beza's Limited Atonement doctrine and Calvin's temporary faith doctrine. Kendall adds, "Perkins's system ultimately requires 'descending

into our own hearts,' the introspection Calvin warns against. The teaching of limited atonement is preponderantly the doctrine that forfeits faith as assurance in Perkins's thought. Since there is no way, apart from extraordinary revelation, that one can know he was one of those for whom Christ died, one must do certain things and infer his assurance. As Beza shows what truly good works are, so does Perkins.

"As for the obvious problem that follows Perkins' assertion that every man is bound to believe his own election, Perkins admits a difficulty. He solves it by saying that every man is not bound to believe his election 'absolutely.' Instead, men are bound conditionally 'according to the tenor of the covenant of grace,' namely, 'to believe in Christ.' Believing in Christ to Perkins, means to descend inside ourselves sooner or later: the eventual result is not merely introspection but a doctrine of faith that could easily breed legalism. The doing of good works, while not the ground of faith, is the ground of assurance. The apostle's admonition in 2 Peter 1:10 is the Spirit's charge that 'by keeping a continual course in good works' we may have 'the most evident tokens of election'" (Kendall, pp. 74-75).

Perkins began a tradition. After his time, Calvin, Beza, and Perkins were often cited as the trinity of the orthodox. Perkins' theology was ultimately given creedal sanction in the Westminster Confession (Kendall, p. 76).

Arminius Jacobus Arminius **(**1559-1609) was born in Oudewater, Holland, which, at the time, was still under Spanish control and was part of the Catholic faith (Bangs, p. 33). In the massacre of Oudewater in 1575, Arminius lost his mother, his siblings, and, apparently, all of his relatives (Bangs, p. 42). His father had already died. In October of 1576, Arminius entered the University of Leiden (Bangs, p. 47) and went to Geneva in 1581, where he studied under Beza (Bangs, p. 66). He left Geneva and studied in Basel. The theological faculty at Basel offered him the title of Doctor "at the cost of the university," but he is said to have refused it because, in his opinion, his youth would not bring honor to the title. He was about 24 at the time. In 1584, he returned to Geneva. During this time, Beza is known to have written a letter in which he commends Arminius for his intellect, diligence, and promise (Bangs, pp.71-75). In 1587, Arminius went to Amsterdam to become a pastor. He spent most of his professional career in Amsterdam as a pastor. He spent 15 years there, as compared to 6 years as a professor in Leiden (Bangs, p. 83).

While Arminius was a pastor, he preached through the book of Romans. On November 6, 1588, he began preaching alternately on Romans and Malachi. He did not conclude the series on Romans until September 30, 1601. In 1591, he reached Romans 7. Apparently, he chose to preach through Romans because he was fascinated with Romans 9: 10-13 (Bangs, p.128).

In his exposition of Romans, when Arminius reached Romans 7:14-15, 22-23, he was faced with the question of whether or not Paul was referring to a regenerate or an unregenerate person. If the person in Romans 7 is regenerate, does this not give a low view of the power of God? If he is unregenerate, does this not allow too much good striving in a sinner? Unlike Calvinists, Arminius concluded Paul was describing an unregenerate man. This caused a controversy. Arminius was accused of Pelagianism and deviation from the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. Arminius denied Pelagianism and any departure of the doctrinal formulas. A meeting was held on February 11, 1592, to consider what may be called the first Arminian controversy. In that meeting, he acknowledged that his exposition of Romans 7 differed from some in the Reformed faith, but he denied that

he was outside of what the Confession and Catechism permitted. Furthermore, he argued that he should be able to exercise the liberty of expounding the Scriptures according to the dictates of his conscience. The meeting, which consisted of Arminius' friends, admonished those present to cultivate peace and harmony. The meeting also concluded that there might well also be matters that were not yet settled in the Reformed Church. Thus, this meeting supported tolerance and Arminius (Bangs, pp. 140-149).

Apparently, about 1591 (some say 1589), Arminius was asked to defend Beza's doctrine, later called Supralapsarianism, against what amounted to Sublapsarianism. In a letter dated March 1591, Arminius said, "There is a lot of controversy among us about predestination, original sin, and free will." He said some refer the decree of predestination to those not yet fallen or yet created (Supralapsarianism). This makes some men already liable to damnation. It also leads to the question of free will. Does free will function in the unregenerate? Is free will active or passive in conversion? If free will is passive, does it have the power to affect conversion? If free will is active, does it precede or follow the divine working? (Bangs, p. 139). One version of this incident claims that Arminius, at one point, held Beza's Supralapsarianism, but after studying this issue because of this request, he changed his mind. However, Bangs, Arminius' biographer, concludes that Arminius probably never agreed with Supralapsarianism. Furthermore, Bangs contends that because of this incident, Arminius took a specific stand against both Supralapsarianism and Sublapsarianism (Bangs, pp. 138-141). But others have said Arminius guardedly defended Sublapsarianism (Ryrie, p. 329).

In 1593, Arminius arrived at Romans 9 and controversy again arose. From what Arminius later wrote, it is evident that he did not interpret the lump in Romans 9:21 to refer to uncreated or unfallen man (Supralapsarianism) as Beza had done. Rather, he followed Augustine, interpreting the lump to refer to fallen man (Bangs, pp. 197-198). Furthermore, Arminius said that Romans 9 was referring to the predestination of classes (Bangs, p. 196). According to him, Romans 9 teaches that God alone determines who He shall save, and He has decreed that believers should be saved. This is his view of predestination (Bangs, p. 198). He concedes that if Romans 9 refers to individuals, then the Decree of absolute predestination is upheld (Bangs, p. 195).

On March 25, 1593, the complaints of some of the citizens concerning Arminius' sermons on Romans 9 formally came to the Consistory [the church leaders]. Admitting that he interpreted Romans 9:18 differently than the margin of the *Confession*, Arminius defended his exposition and insisted he did nothing improper and no more than others had often done. Arminius affirmed his assent to the Belgic Confession with one slight modification. The sixteenth article, the one on eternal election, states, "all whom he, in his eternal and unchangeable counsel, of mere goodness hath elected in Jesus Christ our Lord." In the words of Bangs, Arminius asked, "Does the 'all' refer to believers or is it an arbitrary decree to *bestow faith*?" He accepted the first and rejected the second. The Consistory accepted Arminius' statement and declared the matter closed. Although other doctrinal accusations were raised, his preaching was never again discussed in the Consistory (Bangs, pp. 147-149)

Bangs makes the interesting observation that "what was happening in the 1590s is that the Calvinists seeking to impose their theology on the Dutch Churches ran into constant resistance from the older Reformers and their sympathizers. Snecanus [Gellius Snecanus, another Reformer] and Arminius were not alone in their refusal to capitulate to the

pressures of Beza and his disciples in Holland. The controversy which was beginning to flair in many quarters now caused some consternation among the more 'orthodox' Calvinists themselves, who found their colleagues taking positions which seemed to them to be too extreme to be defended" (Bangs, p. 198). Apparently, Arminius was not alone in reacting to Beza. In fact, Bangs points out that other students at Geneva reacted to Beza both during and after Arminius' time there (Bangs, p. 77).

In 1598, William Perkins' treatise on predestination was published. When it came to Holland, Arminius eagerly bought it because he was an admirer of Perkins. After he read it, he wrote to Perkins, "I thought I perceived some passages of yours which deserved examination by the rule of truth. Wherefore, I deemed that it would not be amiss if I should institute a calm conference with you respecting that little book of yours." Bangs comments, "He then proceeded to volunteer his comments on the pamphlet—over 200 pages in the English translations." Before he finished, Perkins died (1602). The manuscript, entitled *The Examination of Perkins' Pamphlet,* was not published until 1612 after Arminius' death (Bangs, pp. 208-209). Bangs calls this work "the basic document of Arminianism" (Bangs, p. 209).

Perkins' book presented a "Supralapsarian point of view in which the creation and the fall become the means for carrying out the prior decree of election or damnation. He went so far as to say that 'no good thing can be done unless God doth absolutely will and work it' and 'no evil can be avoided unless God do hinder it.' The will of God is known, he said, 'not only by the written word, or by revelation, but by the event. For that which cometh to pass doth, therefore, come to pass because God hath willed that it come to pass'" (Bangs, p. 208). In his reply, Arminius charged Perkins with making God the author of sin (Bangs, p. 215). Perkins taught double predestination; Arminius said God determined to show mercy on those who believe (Bangs, p. 112). For Arminius, the predestination of individuals is "with respect to foreseen faith." "Believers shall be saved, unbelievers shall be damned" (Bangs, p. 219). Perkins said that Christ had not died for every man but only for the elect. Arminius made a distinction between salvation provided and salvation applied. The first is universal; the second is restricted (Bangs, p. 214). Arminius also said that the free will in sinners is "addicted to evil" and "it will not be bent to good except by grace" (Bangs, p. 215). Yet, he went on to say, "Grace is present with all men, by which their free will may be actually bent to good; but that there is in all men such a will as is flexible to either side upon the accession of grace." Arminius made a distinction between "the ability to believe" and "believing." "The ability to believe belongs to nature; believing to grace" (Bangs, p.216).

The subject of eternal security also came up at this time. Bangs suggests, "It was evidently a new issue with Arminius" (Bangs, p. 217). Apparently, Arminius waffled on this issue. In the early part of his *Examination of Perkins' Pamphlet*, he wrote that he 'should not readily dare to say that true and saving faith may finally and totally fall away." At the end of the discussion, however, he said that if a living member of Christ "grows slothful, is not careful over itself, gives place to sin, by little and little it becomes half-dead; and so at length proceeding still further, dies altogether, and ceases to be a member." Bangs adds, "Arminius continued to skirt this issue throughout his career. He dealt with it again during his Leiden years and took a slightly different approach to the problem" (Bangs, p. 219).

In 1603, Arminius became the professor of theology at Leiden. He remained in that position until his death in 1609. There was some opposition to his becoming the theology professor (Bangs, pp. 231-239). Nevertheless, before assuming the position of professor, he passed a doctrinal examination, which included an oral exam and a public disputation, that is, a public debate (Bangs, pp. 252-253). However, by the end of 1604, his theological battle at Leiden began in earnest. A professor at Leiden named Franciscus Gomarus, who was a proponent of Beza's doctrine of predestination, took issue with Arminius. During these years, Arminius was accused of doctrinal problems concerning predestination, the Trinity (subordinationism), free will, etc. Rumors were rampant. For example, he was accused of teaching that the Pope was a member of the body of Christ. Meetings were called; a National Synod was proposed. In 1608, Arminius and Gomarus were ordered to submit their opinions in writing. Arminius' statement was entitled *Declaration of Sentiments*, which Bangs says represents the mature views of Arminius (Bangs, p. 307). On November 23, 1608, the State of Holland invited the various sides to present their thinking about the Confession and Catechism. Before that synod could be held, Arminius died (October 19, 1609). After his death, the ministers who agreed with Arminius responded to the request of the State. That document became known as the Remonstrance of 1610.

This overview of Arminius' life demonstrates that he reacted to the Calvinism of Calvin's successor, Beza. Indeed, Arminius' biographer makes the statement that it was the insistence on the details of Beza's doctrine of predestination (Supralapsarianism) "as essential to Reformed orthodoxy, which had a great deal to do with the precipitation of the so-called Arminian controversy" (Bangs, p. 68). Kendall says that "the heat of the battle" was over the Decrees (Kendall, p. 147). Here is a brief review of some of the things Arminius said pertaining to salvation.

1. Sin. In the summer of 1605, Arminius said, "In this state [that is, 'under the Dominion of Sin'] the free will of man towards the True Good is not only wounded, maimed, infirm, bent, and weakened; but it is also imprisoned, destroyed, and lost: And its powers are not only debilitated and useless unless they are assisted by grace, but it has no powers whatever except such as are excited by Divine grace: For Christ has said, 'Without me ye can do nothing.'" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. II, p. 192). Bangs observes that "few of those who called themselves Arminians in later centuries could have accepted a position so strongly Calvinistic" (Bangs, p. 269). In his *Declaration*, Arminius wrote, "In his *lapsed and sinful state*, man is not capable, of and by himself, either to think, or will, or do that which is really good; but it is necessary for him to be regenerated and renewed in his intellect, affections or will, and all his powers, by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, that he may be qualified rightly to understand, esteemed, consider, will, and perform whatever is truly good" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. I, pp. 659-660).

2. Predestination. According to Bangs, in his *Declaration*, Arminius rejected what amounts to Supralapsarianism, Infralapsarianism, and Sublapsarianism. (Bangs, pp. 308-312; see Arminius, *Works*, vol. I, pp. 614-653). Arminius wrote, "I conclude *that man did not sin on account of any necessity through a preceding decree of Predestination*" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. I, p. 622). "*God has not absolutely predestinated any man to salvation"* (Arminius, *Works*, vol. I, p. 623). Arminius quotes Nicholas Hemmingius, who said, "Do the elect believe? Or 'Are believers the true elect?' and concludes that the latter

position agrees with Moses and the Prophets, with Christ and his Apostles" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. I, pp. 642-643).

After dismissing what he perceives to be the erroneous views of predestination, Arminius sets forth his own view. According to him, predestination consists of four items: "I. The First absolute decree of God concerning the salvation of sinful man is that by which he decreed to appoint his Son, Jesus Christ, for a Mediator, Redeemer, Savior, Priest, King, who might destroy sin by his own death, might by his obedience obtain the salvation which had been lost, and might communicate it by his own virtue.

"II. The second precise and absolute decree of God is that in which he decreed to receive into favor *those who repent and believe*, and, in Christ, for His sake and through Him to effect the salvation of such penitents and believers as persevere to the end. But to leave in sin and under wrath *all impenitent persons and unbelievers*, and to damn them as aliens from Christ.

"III. The Third Divine decree is that by which God decreed to administer *in a sufficient and efficacious manner* the means that were necessary for repentance and faith; and to have such administration instituted (1) according to the *Divine Wisdom*, by which God knows what is proper and becoming both to his mercy and his severity, and (2) according to *Divine Justice*, by which He is prepared to adopt whatever his wisdom may prescribe and to put into execution.

"IV. To these succeed the Fourth decree, by which God decrees to save and damn certain particular persons. This decree has its foundation in the foreknowledge of God, by which he knew from all eternity those individuals who *would*, through his preventing grace, *believe*, and, through his subsequent grace *would persevere*, according to the before described administration of those means which are suitable and proper for conversion and, by which foreknowledge, he likewise knew those who *would not believe and persevere*" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. I, pp. 653-654).

In the words of Bangs, Arminius' view of predestination is: "In short, God has decreed to appoint his Son as the Savior, to receive into favor those sinners who repent and believe in Christ, and to administer the means that are sufficient and efficacious for such faith; He then decrees the salvation and damnation of particular persons on the basis of the divine foreknowledge on the belief and perseverance, or lack thereof, of the individuals" (Bangs, p. 312).

3. Atonement. Arminius definitely believed in what came to be known as Unlimited Atonement. In one article, he said that "Christ died for all men" and referred to 1 John 2:2, John 1:29, John 6:51, and 2 Peter 2:1, 3 to prove it. He approvingly quotes an ancient author who said, "the blood of Jesus Christ is the price paid for the whole world" and adds, "such is likewise the concurrent opinion of all antiquity" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. II, pp. 9-10).

4. Grace. Perkins wrote that five graces were necessary for salvation, namely prevenient, preparatory, operative, co-operative, and the gift of perseverance. He said, "No one of those five graces is alone sufficient to salvation" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. I, p. 472). In his response to Perkins, Arminius argued that prevenient and preparatory graces are either sufficient or efficacious. He then said, "They who defend sufficient grace will assert that these latter [operative and co-operative graces] have been prepared and set forth for all those who have suffered themselves to be moved, by sufficiently prevenient and preparing grace, thither where grace intends; and after them also the gift of perseverance itself."

Arminius concluded, "Wherefore by that reason you have not refuted sufficient grace, so far as it is distinguished from efficacious" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. III, p. 472).

Bangs comments, "In sinful man, free will is addicted to evil, but upon the accession of the grace of God that appears to all men, it becomes flexible to either side. Grace rescues free will, but not without the choice of the will thus rescued. It is free will that is saved, and the saved free will concurs in its salvation" (Bangs, p. 216). Bangs insists that for Arminius, man's cooperation is by grace and that Arminius affirmed "grace to be essential for the beginning, continuation, and consummation of faith" (Bangs, pp. 342-343).

Arminius also wrote, "Grace is not an omnipotent action of God, which cannot be resisted by man's free will" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. III, p. 470) and "I am fully persuaded that the doctrine of Irresistible Grace is repugnant to the Sacred Scriptures, to all the Ancients, and to our own Confession and Catechism" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. I, pp. 301-302).

Bangs comments, "Sinful man, then, has 'free will,' but not a will that is capable of accomplishing spiritual good, i.e., of doing a meritorious work. His free will is in bondage to sin and needs salvation from outside. Arminius quotes with approval from Bernard of Clairvaux: 'Take away free will, and nothing will be left to be saved. Take away grace, and nothing will be left as the source of salvation. This work cannot be affected without two parties—one, from whom it may come: the other, to whom or in whom it may be wrought. God is the author of salvation. Free will only is capable of being saved.' There is nothing here of grace as an *assistance* given to a man who is only weakened by sin. All response of man is the work of grace. The entire process of believing—from 'initial fear' to 'illumination, regeneration, renovation, and confirmation'—is of grace. But one result of gracious renewal is the *cooperating* which man does in believing. When grace has kindled new light and love, etc., man 'loves and embraces that which is good, just, and holy, and ... being made capable in Christ, cooperating [*cooperans*] now with God, he prosecutes the good which he knows and loves and he begins himself to perform it indeed.' The cooperation is not the means to renewal; it is the result of renewal" (Bangs, p. 341).

5. Repentance. According to Arminius, repentance is "sorrow on account of sins" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. II, p. 398). Repentance is *prior* to faith in Christ (Arminius, *Works*, vol. II, p. 723). Kendall observes that Arminius "reverses Calvin's order regarding faith and repentance" (Kendall, p. 146).

6. Faith. Arminius taught that faith is a gift. He said, "Faith is a gracious and gratuitous gift of God" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. II, p. 723). "Faith is the effect of God illuminating the mind and sealing the heart, and it is his mere gift" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. II, p. 67). Arminius discusses several different types of faith. In one place, he said, "Faith, generally, is the assent given to truth; and divine faith is that which is given to truth divinely revealed. Evangelical faith is the assent of the mind, produced by the Holy Spirit, through the Gospel, in sinners, who through the law know and acknowledge their sins, and are penitent on account of them: By which they are not only fully persuaded within themselves, that Jesus Christ has been constituted by God the author of salvation to those who obey Him, and that He is their own Savior if they have believed in Him; and by which they also believe in Him as such, and through Him on God as the Benevolent Father in Him, to the salvation of believers and to the glory of Christ and God" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. II, p. 400). In another place, he wrote, "Justifying faith is that by which men believe in Jesus Christ, as in the Savior of those universally who believe, and of each of them in particular, even the Savior

of him who, through Christ, believes in God who justifies the ungodly" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. II, p. 723).

He also called faith "the act of the believer" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. II, p. 49). In fact, to put Arminius' view into perspective, it needs to be pointed out that he said, "This faith is the foundation on which rests obedience." He then goes on to explain that this obedience has three parts: "The first is Repentance, for it is the calling of sinners to righteousness, the second is Faith in Christ, and in God through Christ; for vocation is made through the Gospel, which is the word of faith. The Third is observance of God's commands, in which consist holiness of life, to which believers are called, and without which no man can see God" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. II, p. 398).

Kendall, who wrote his doctrinal dissertation at Oxford on the nature of saving faith from William Perkins to the Westminster Assembly, said that the views of Arminius and Perkins on the nature of saving faith were the same. He then adds, "To the experimental predestinarians, the order of the decrees seems too precious to be given up, and the heat of the battle is over these decrees. Arminius's struggle to get men to see that he is, in effect, holding to the same doctrine of faith as that of the 'orthodox' seems not to have counted. His sin was bringing the decrees in line with his voluntaristic view of faith" (that is, faith as an act of the will in contrast to a passive persuasion in the mind; Kendall, p. 147).

7. Assurance. On the subject of the assurance of salvation, Arminius said, "It is possible for him who believes in Jesus Christ to be certain and persuaded, and, *if his heart condemn him not*, he is now in reality assured *that he is a son of God and stands in the grace of Jesus Christ*. Such a certainty is wrought in the mind, as well by the action of the Holy Spirit inwardly actuating the believer and by the fruits of faith, as from his own conscience, and the testimony of God's Spirit witnessing together with his conscience" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. I, p. 667). "Since God promises eternal life to all who believe in Christ, it is impossible for him who believes, and who knows that he believes, to doubt his own salvation, unless he doubts of this willingness to God [to perform his promise]" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. II, p. 67). Bangs contends that for Arminius "there is no *present* assurance of *final* salvation" (Bangs, p. 348), but he did believe that believers could have assurance based on the decree, "They who believe shall be saved" (Sell, p. 9).

8. Security. In his answer to Perkins, Arminius said, "I should not readily dare to say that true and saving faith may finally and totally fall away; although several of the Fathers often seem to affirm that" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. III, p. 454). Elsewhere, Arminius wrote, "Believers are sometimes so circumstanced as not to produce, for a season, any effects of true faith, not even the actual apprehension of grace and the promises of God, nor confidence or trust in God and Christ; yet this is the very thing which is necessary to obtain salvation" (Bangs, p. 349). In the *Declaration*, Arminius said, "I think it is useful and will be quite necessary in our first convention [or Synod] to institute a diligent enquiry from the Scriptures, whether it is possible for some individuals through negligence to desert the commencement of their existence in Christ, to cleave again the present evil world, to decline from the sound doctrine which was once delivered to them, to lose a good conscience, and to cause Divine grace to be ineffectual. Though I hear openly and ingenuously affirm, I never taught that a *true believer can either totally or finally fall away from the faith and perish*, yet I will not conceal that there are passages of Scripture which seem to me to wear this aspect and those answers to them which I have been permitted to see, are not of such a kind as to approve themselves on all points to my understanding. On

the other hand, certain passages are produced for the contrary doctrine [of Unconditional Perseverance] which are worthy of much consideration" (Arminius, *Works*, vol. I, pp. 665-667).

Bangs says, "When asked if believers can decline from salvation, Arminius replied that the possibility, 'when rigidly and accurately examined can scarcely be admitted; it being impossible for believers, as long as they remain believers, to decline from salvation.'" According to Bangs, "For Arminius, a believer who ceases to trust God is no longer a believer." However, that does not mean that an elect person can become a non-elect person because, for Arminius, the term "believer" is not equivalent to the term "elect." As Arminius himself said, "Since election to salvation comprehends within its limits not only faith but likewise perseverance in faith, … *believers* and *the elect* are not taken for the same person" (Bangs, pp. 348-349).

An Evaluation

The critical question, of course, is, "What does the Scripture teach concerning the doctrinal issues the Arminian System of Salvation raises?"

Conditional Predestination The first article of the Remonstrance states that God determined to save in Christ those who believe on His Son, Jesus, and persevere in this faith and obedience of faith and to leave the unbelieving in sin. In short, the foundation of Arminianism is the belief that God's election is based on His foreknowing who would believe. The only verse used to support this position in the Remonstrance is John 3:36, which simply says that the one who believes has everlasting life and the one who does not believe experiences the wrath of God.

The verse that Arminians usually use to prove election based on foreknowledge is 1 Peter 1:2, which says, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Also, in Romans 8:29, Paul says, "For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Do these verses prove the Arminian position?

The answer is "No." There is no doubt that election is based on foreknowledge. After all, both Peter and Paul say that it is. The question is, "*What* did God foreknow?" Neither Peter nor Paul tells us that! There is no doubt that these verses indicate that God's election is based on foreknowledge, but that is as far as the Scripture goes. The Bible never says *what* God foreknew.

Moreover, there are verses that clearly indicate that whatever it was that God foreknew, it was not anything in man. For example, in one of the major passages on election in the New Testament, Paul says, "So then it is not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy" (Rom. 9:16). In other words, the Scripture specifically says that God's election is not based on man's choice ("wills"). Paul also says, "Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph. 1:5). He adds, "In him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:11). Thus, the Scripture stops short of actually saying that God elected based on His foreknowledge of belief or unbelief, and it specifically says that the basis of His choice was "according to the good pleasure of His will."

Indeed, it is not that faith is the basis of election; it is the exact opposite. It is election that is the basis of faith. Luke says, "As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). The Arminian system of salvation has reached a conclusion that not only is not stated in Scripture but also goes beyond Scripture and is even contrary to Scripture.

Universal Atonement The second article says, "Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, died for all men." John 3:16 and 1 John 2:2 are the verses that are used in the Remonstrance to support this doctrine. John 3:16 certainly seems to be saying that God's plan of salvation included the whole world. Other verses, like John 1:29, use the word "world" to refer to Christ's death. Those who believe in Limited Atonement claim that the word "world" in these kinds of verses means "the world of the elect." That is not the most natural way to understand these verses.

In fact, it would be most unnatural to interpret 1 John 2:2 in such a fashion. John says that Jesus Christ is "the propitiation for our sins and not ours only but also for the whole world." Certainly, the most natural way to understand this verse is that Jesus died not only for the sins of *believers* but for the sins of the *whole human race*. To interpret the phrase "the whole world" as being the world of the elect is forced. The question is, what did John mean by the expression "the whole world"? Did he mean the world of the elect? Or did he mean the world of mankind? His answer is in 1 John 5:19, where he says, "The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one." Since the expression "the whole world' in 1 John refers to the unsaved world, John is definitely teaching that Jesus Christ died for all mankind. Peter does the same. Speaking about unregenerate false teachers, he says they deny "the Lord who bought them" (2 Pet. 2:1). The word translated "bought" is the Greek word "redeemed." This verse then indicates that Christ died for unsaved people, which means that it teaches Unlimited Atonement.

Capable Depravity The third article states, "Man has not saving grace of himself, nor the energy of his free will." The original position of Arminianism is that man did not have the ability to do "anything that is truly good," including faith, without the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The next article in the Remonstrance speaks about prevenient or assisting and cooperative grace. Later, Arminians taught that a general grace made it possible for all men to believe.

The Scriptures teach that unsaved people have the ability to respond to God. Jesus says, "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or *whether* I speak on My own *authority*" (Jn. 7:17; see also 6:37). He also says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing!" (Mt. 23:37) and "but you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (Jn. 5:40). Jesus is saying people are not saved because they are not *willing*.

Resistible Grace The fourth article says grace "is not irresistible" and cites Acts 7 as scriptural proof. There is no doubt that Acts 7:51 says, "You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your father did, so do you." There is also no doubt that the ones resisting the Holy Spirit were unregenerate.

The plain statement of Scripture is that people can resist the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her

chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing!" (Mt. 23:37) and "But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (Jn. 5:38-40). Stephen said, "*You* stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did,* so *do* you" (Acts 7:51). Paul and Barnabas said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46).

Conditional Security The fifth and final article concludes that whether or not regenerate individuals can ultimately lose their salvation needs to be "more particularly determined out of the Holy Scriptures before we ourselves can teach it with the full persuasion of our minds." Later, Arminians concluded, of course, that it was possible for regenerate individuals to fall from grace and thus lose eternal salvation.

Are believers eternally secure or are they conditionally secure? Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (Jn. 5:24). There are two different judgments of individuals. All *believers* will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, where rewards will be determined (1 Cor. 3:11-15). All *unbelievers* will appear before the Great White Throne Judgment and all who appear at that judgment are cast into the eternal lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15). Since all believers must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10), Jesus could not possibly be referring to that judgment. Therefore, John 5:24 promises that those who truly trust Christ will be given eternal life and they will not stand before the Great White Throne Judgment, which is the only judgment where the eternal destiny of individuals is the issue.

Summary: Arminianism, the doctrine that while unregenerate people are incapable of believing without grace, they can be saved because God determined to save those who would believe on Christ and preserve in faith and obedience, because Christ died for all men and because the Holy Spirit who can be resisted makes grace available to all, is basically an unscriptural doctrine that developed as a reaction to the Calvinism of Beza.

Within evangelicalism, Arminianism has been praised and condemned. One nineteenth-century author saw Arminius as one of the three greatest theologians of church history. He concluded that Athanasius understood God; Augustine understood man; Arminius understood the relationship between God and man. Not all agree. An English Calvinist said Arminianism is the religion of common sense, and Calvinism is the religion of Paul (Bangs, p.18). In the final analysis, Arminianism leaves the ultimate choice of salvation up to man, whereas Calvinism teaches that God is the One who chooses.

THE CALVINISTIC SYSTEM OF SALVATION

The third system of salvation that has been "officially" and widely accepted is Calvinism. Calvinism, as formulated at the Council of Dort and incorporated into the Westminster Confession (1643-1649), has been a major theological force within Protestantism. The Westminster Confession has been the theological foundation of Presbyterianism. The first major confession of Congregationalism, the Savoy Declaration (1658), followed the Westminster Confession almost verbatim except for the doctrine of the church. Reformed Churches hold to the Belgic Confession (1561) via the Synod of Dort. The Second London Confession (1677), which, like the Savoy Declaration, follows the Westminster Confession almost verbatim except for statements concerning the doctrine of the church, has been the theological statement for most Baptists. "In a word: a good number of Protestant bodies in the Western World are in some way indebted either to the Westminster Confession or the Synod of Dort for much of their theological heritage" (Kendall, p. 2).

An Explanation

What is Calvinism? Calvinism is the system of salvation that says man, who is incapable of any saving good without regenerating grace, is saved because 1) God decreed to save some based solely on His good pleasure (that is, not based on anything in man), 2) while Christ died sufficiently for the whole world, He died effectively to redeem the elect, and 3) the Holy Spirit, who cannot be resisted, pervades the innermost recesses, infuses new qualities into the will, quickens, and infuses faith into the individual and even though a true believer can fall into sin, they can never be totally lost because the Holy Spirit will renew such a person to repentance.

It is generally recognized that the Synod of Dort formulated what has become known as Calvinism and that the Westminster Confession incorporated that doctrinal system into its statement of faith. The Canons of the Synod of Dort comprise a preface, positive articles, rejections of the opposite errors, and a conclusion. Except for the headings, the following is the abridged edition found in the *Creeds of Christendom* by Schaff (vol. III, pp. 581-595).

Calvinism teaches God elects some to be saved and gives them faith but leaves the non-elect to their just judgment. "Of divine predestination. Art. I. As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are obnoxious to eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin, according to the words of the Apostle (Rom. iii. 19), 'that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God;' (ver. 23) 'for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;' and (vi. 23), 'for the wages of sin is death.'"

"Art. II. But 'in this the love of God was manifested, that he sent his only begotten Son into the world,' 'that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (I John iv. 9: John iii. 16)."

"Art. III And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully sends the messengers of these most joyful tidings to whom he will, and at what time he pleaseth; by whose

ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?' (Rom. x. 14, 15)."

"Art. IV. The wrath of God abideth upon those who believe not the gospel; but such as receiveth, and embrace Jesus the Savior by a true and living faith, are by him delivered from the wrath of God and from destruction, and have the gift of eternal life conferred upon them."

"Art. V. The cause or guilt of this unbelief, as well as of all other sins, is no wise in God, but in man himself: whereas faith in Jesus Christ, and salvation through him is the free gift of God, as it is written, 'by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God' (Eph. ii. 8); and, 'Unto you it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him,' etc. (Phil. i. 29)."

"Art. VI. That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree. 'For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world' (Acts xv. 18; Eph. I. 11). According to which decree he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe; while he leaves the non-elect in his just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is a specially displayed the profound, and merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men, equally involved in ruin; or that decree of *election* and *reprobation*, revealed in the Word of God, which, through men of perverse, impure, and unstable minds wrest it to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation."

"Art. VII. Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby before the foundation of the world, he hath, out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which hath fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation. This elect number, by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ to be saved by him, and effectually to call and draw them to his communion by his Word and Spirit; to bestow upon them true faith, justification, and sanctification; and having powerfully preserve them in the fellowship of his Son finally to glorify them for the demonstration of his mercy, and for the praise of the riches of his glorious grace: as it is written, 'According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestined unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved' (Eph. i. 4-6). And elsewhere, 'whom he did predestine he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified' (Rom. viii. 30)."

"Art. VIII. There are not various decrees of election, but one and the same decree respecting all those who shall be saved both under the Old and New Testament; since the Scripture declares the good pleasure, purpose, and counsel of the divine will to be one, according to which he hath chosen us from eternity, both to grace and to glory, to salvation and the way of salvation, which he hath ordained that we should walk therein."

"Art. IX. This election was not founded upon foreseen faith, and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition in man, as the prerequisite, cause, or condition on which it depended; but men are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc. Therefore election is the fountain of every saving good; from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects, according to that of the apostle. 'He hath chosen us [not because we were, but] that we should be holy and without blame before him in love' (Eph. i. 4)."

"Art. X. The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election; which doth not consist herein that God, foreseeing all possible qualities of human actions, elected certain of these as a condition of salvation, but that he was pleased out of the common mass of sinners to adopt some certain persons as a particular people to himself, as it is written, 'For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil,' etc., 'it was said [namely, to Rebecca] the elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated' (Rom. ix.. 11-13): and, 'as many as were ordained to eternal life believed' (Acts xiii. 48)."

"Art. XI. And as God himself is most wise, unchangeable, omniscient, and omnipotent, so the election made by him can neither be interrupted nor changed, recalled nor annulled; neither can the elect be cast away, nor their number diminished."

"Art. XII. The elect, in due time, though in various degrees and in different measures, attain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election, not by inquisitively prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves, with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure, the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God; such as a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a Godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc."

"Art. XIII. The sense and certainty of this election afford to the children of God additional matter for daily humiliation before him, for adoring the depth of his mercies, and rendering grateful returns of ardent love to him who first manifested so great love towards them. The consideration of this doctrine of election is so far from encouraging remissness in the observance of the divine commands or from sinking men into carnal security, that these, in the just judgment of God, are the usual effects of rash presumption or of idol and wanton trifling with the grace of election, and those who refuse to walk in the ways of the elect."

"Art. XIV. As the doctrine of divine election by the most wise counsel of God was declared by the Prophets, by Christ himself, and by the Apostles, and is clearly revealed in the Scripture both of the Old and New Testaments, so it is still to be published in due time and placed in the Church of God, for which it was peculiarly designed, provided it be done with reverence, in the spirit of discretion and piety, for the glory of God's most holy name, and for enlivening and comforting his people, without vainly attempting to investigate the secret ways of the Most High."

"Art. XV. What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election is the express testimony of sacred Scripture, that not all, but some only, are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree; whom God, out of his sovereign, most just, irreprehensible and unchangeable good pleasure, hath decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion; but permitting them in his just judgment to follow their own way; at least, for the declaration of his justice, to condemn

and punish them forever, not only on account of their unbelief, but also for all their other sins. And this is the decree of reprobation which by no means makes God the author of sin (the very thought of which is blasphemy), but declares him to be an awful, irreprehensible, and righteous judge and avenger."

"Art. XVI. Those who do not yet experience a lively faith in Christ, and assured confidence of soul, peace of conscience, and earnest endeavor after filial obedience, and glorying in God through Christ, efficaciously wrought in them, and do nevertheless persist in the use of means which God hath appointed for working these graces in us, ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to rank themselves among the reprobate, but diligently to persevere in the use of means, and with ardent desires devoutly and humbly to wait for a season of richer grace. Much less cause have they to be terrified by the doctrine of reprobation, who, though they seriously desire to be turned to God, to please him only, and to be delivered from the body of death, cannot yet reach that measure of holiness and faith to which they aspire; since a merciful God has promised that he will not quench the smoking flax, nor break a bruised reed."

"Art. XVII. Since we are to judge of the will of God from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they together with the parents are comprehended, godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy."

"Art. XVIII. To those who murmur at the free grace of election, and just severity of reprobation, we answer with the Apostle: 'Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?' (Rom. ix 20); and quote the language of our Savior: 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?' (Matt. xx 15). And therefore with holy adoration of those mysteries, we exclaim, in the words of the Apostle: 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen' (Rom. xi. 33-36)."

Calvinism teaches Christ died for the elect. "Of the death of Christ and the redemption of men thereby. Art. I. God is not only supremely merciful but also supremely just. And his justice requires (as he hath revealed himself in his Word) that our sins committed against his infinite majesty should be punished, not only with temporal but with eternal punishments, both in body and soul, which we cannot escape unless satisfaction be made to the justice of God."

"Art. II. Since, therefore, we are unable to make that satisfaction in our own persons or to deliver ourselves from the wrath of God, he hath been pleased of his infinite mercy to give his only-begotten Son for our surety, who was made sin, and became a curse for us and in our stead, that he might make satisfaction to divine justice on our behalf."

"Art. III The death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin; is of infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world."

"Art. IV. This death derives its infinite value and dignity from these considerations; because the person who submitted to it was not only really man and perfectly holy, but also the only-begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and

Holy Spirit, which qualifications were necessary to constitute him a Savior for us; and because it was attended with a sense of wrath and curse of God due to us for sin."

"Art. V. Moreover, the promise of the gospel is that whoever believeth in Christ crucified shall not perish but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel."

"Art. VI. And, whereas as many who are called by the gospel do not repent nor believe in Christ, but perish in unbelief; this is not owing to any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross, but is wholly to be imputed to themselves."

"Art. VII. But as many as truly believe, and are delivered and saved from sin and destruction through the death of Christ, are indebted for this benefit solely to the grace of God given them in Christ from everlasting, and not to any merit of their own."

"VIII. For this was the sovereign counsel and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation: that is it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectively redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those who, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father; that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death; should purge them from all sin, by original and actual whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever."

"Art IX. This purpose proceeding from everlasting love towards the elect, has, from the beginning of the world to this day, been powerfully accomplished, and will, henceforward, still continue to be accomplished, notwithstanding all the ineffectual opposition of the gates of hell; so that the elect in due time may be gathered together into one, and that there never may be wanting a Church composed of believers, the foundation of which is laid in the blood of Christ, which may steadfastly love and faithfully serve him as their Savior, who, as a bridegroom for his bride, laid down his life for them upon the cross; and which may celebrate his praises here and through all eternity."

Calvinism teaches Total Depravity (Inability) "Of the corruption of man, his conversion to God, and the manner thereof. Art. I. Man was originally formed after the image of God. His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator, and of spiritual things; his heart and will were upright, all his affections pure, and the whole Man was holy; but revolting from God by the instigating of the devil, and abusing the freedom of his own will, he forfeited these excellent gifts, and on the contrary entailed on himself blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity, and perverseness of judgment; because wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in [all] his affections."

"Art. II. Man after the fall begat children in his own likeness. A corrupt stock produced a corrupt offspring. Hence all the prosperity of Adam, Christ only accepted, have derived corruption from their original parent, not by imitation, as the Pelagians of old asserted, but by the propagation of a vicious nature [in the consequence of a just judgment of God]."

"Art. III. Therefore all men are conceived in sin and are by nature children of wrath, incapable of any saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto; and, without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, nor to dispose themselves to reformation."

"Art. IV. There remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment. But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God and a true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it [back] in unrighteousness; by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God."

"Art. V. In the same light are we consider the law of the Decalogue, delivered by God to his peculiar people the Jews, by the hands of Moses. For though it discovers the greatness of sin, and more and more convinces man thereof, yet as it neither points out a remedy nor imparts strength to extricate him from misery, and thus being weak through the flesh, leaves the transgressor under the curse, man cannot by this law (that is the law of Moses) obtain saving grace."

"Art. VI. What, therefore, neither the light of nature nor the law could do, that God performs by the operation of his Holy Spirit through the word or ministry of reconciliation: which is the glad tidings concerning the Messiah, by means whereof it hat pleased God to save such as believe, as well under the Old as under the New Testaments."

"Art. VII. This mystery of his will God discovered to but a small number under the Old Testament; under the New, he reveals himself to many, without any distinction of people. The cause of this dispensation is not to be ascribed to the superior worth of one nation above another, nor to their making a better us of the light of nature, but results wholly from the sovereign good pleasure and unmerited love of God. Hence they to whom so great and so gracious a blessing is communicated, above their desert, or rather notwithstanding their demerits, are bound to acknowledge it with humble and grateful hearts, and with the Apostle to adore, not curiously to pry into the severity and justice of God's judgments displayed in others, to whom this grace is not given."

"Art. VIII. As many as are called by the gospel are unfeignedly called; for God hath most earnestly and truly declared in his Word what will be acceptable to him, namely, that all who are called should comply with the invitation. He, moreover, seriously promises eternal life and rest to as many as shall come to him, and believe on him."

"Art. IX. It is not the fault of the gospel, nor Christ offered therein, nor of God, who calls men by the gospel, and confers upon them various gifts, that those who are called by the ministry of the Word refuse to come and be converted. The fault lies in themselves; some of whom when called, regardless of their danger, reject the Word of life; others, though they receive it, suffer it not to make a lasting impression on their hearts; therefore, their joy, arising only from a temporary faith, soon vanishes and they fall away; while others choke the seed of the Word by perplexing cares and the pleasures of this world, and produce no fruit. This our Savior teaches in the parable of the sower (Matt. xiii.)."

"Art. X. But that others who are called by the Gospel obey the call and are converted, is not to be ascribed to the proper exercise of free-will, whereby one distinguishes himself above others equally furnished with grace sufficient for faith and conversion (as the proud

heresy of Pelagius maintains); but it must be wholly ascribed to God, who, as he hath chosen his own from eternity in Christ, so he [calls them effectively in time] confers upon them faith and repentance, rescues them from the power of darkness, and translates them into the kingdom of his own Son, that they may show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light; and may glory not in themselves but in the Lord, according to the Testimony of the apostles in various places."

"Art. XI. But when God accomplishes his good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, he not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds by his Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God, but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit he pervades the innermost recesses of the man; he opens the closed and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised; infuses new qualities into the will, which though hithertofore, dead, he quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, he renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that, like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions."

"Art. XII. And this is the regeneration so highly celebrated in the Scriptures and dominated a new creation; a resurrection from the dead; a making alive, which God works in us without our aid. But this is no wise effected merely by the external preaching of the Gospel, by moral suasion, or such a mode of operation that, after God has performed his part, it still remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not, to be converted or to continue unconverted; but it is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation or the resurrection from the dead, as the Scripture inspired by the author of this work declares; so that all in whose hearts God works in this marvelous manner are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and due actually believe. Whereupon the will thus renewed is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence, becomes itself active wherefore, also, man is himself rightly said to believe and repent, by virtue of that grace received."

"Art. XIII. The manner of this operation cannot be fully comprehended by believers in this life notwithstanding which, they rest satisfied with knowing and experiencing that by this grace of God they are enabled to believe with the heart and to love their Savior."

"Art. XIV. Faith is to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure, but because it is in reality conferred, breathed, and infused into him; nor even because God bestows the power or ability to believe, and then expects that man should, by the exercise of his own free will, consent to the terms of salvation, and actually believe in Christ; but because he who works in man both to will and to do, and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to believe and the act of believing also.

"Art. XV. God is under no obligation to confer this grace upon any; for how can he be indebted to man, who had no previous gift to bestow as a foundation for such recompense? Nay, who has nothing of his own but sin and falsehood. He, therefore, who becomes the subject of this grace owes eternal gratitude to God, and gives him thanks forever. Whoever is not made partaker thereof is either altogether regardless of these spiritual gifts and satisfied with his own condition, or is no apprehension of danger, and vainly boast the possession of that which he has not. With respect to those who make an external profession of faith and live regular lives, we are bound, after the example of the apostle, to judge and

to speak of them in the most favorable manner; for the secret recesses of the heart are unknown to us. And as to others, who have not yet been called, it is our duty to pray for them to God, who calls those things which be not as though they were. But we are in no wise to conduct ourselves toward them with haughtiness as if we had made ourselves to differ."

"Art. XVI. But as man by the fall did not cease to be a creature endowed with understanding and will, nor did sin, which pervaded the whole race of mankind, deprive him of the human nature, but brought upon him depravity and spiritual death; so also this grace of regeneration does not treat men as senseless stocks and blocks, nor take away their will and its properties, neither does violence thereto; but spiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and at the same time sweetly and powerfully blends it, that where carnal rebellion and resistance formally prevailed a ready and sincere spiritual obedience begins to reign; in which the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consist. Wherefore, unless the admirable Author of every good work wrought in us, man can have no hope of recovering from his fall by his own free will, by the abuse of which, in a state of innocence, he plunged himself into ruin."

"Art. XVII. As the almighty operation of God, whereby he prolongs and supports this our natural life, does not exclude, but requires the use of means, by which God of his infinite mercy and goodness hath chosen to exert his influence; so also the before-mentioned supernatural operation of God, by which we are regenerated, in nowise excludes or subverts the use of the Gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration and food of the soul. Wherefore as the Apostles, and the teachers who succeeded them, piously instructed the people concerning this grace of God, to his glory and the abasement of all pride, and in the meantime, however, neglected not to keep them by the sacred precepts of the gospel, in the exercise of the Word, the sacraments and discipline; so, even to this day, be it far from either instructors or instructed to presume to tempt God in the Church by separating what he of his good pleasure hath most intimately joined together. For grace is conferred by means of admonitions; and the more readily we perform our duty the more eminent usually is this blessing of God working in us, and the more directly is his work advanced; to whom alone all the glory, both of means and their saving fruit and efficacy, is forever due. Amen."

Calvinism teaches God delivers the elect from the slavery of sin, restores them if they fall, and preserves them to the end "Of the perseverance of the saints. Art. I. Whom God calls, according to his purpose, to the communion of his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, he delivers also from the dominion and slavery of sin in this life; though not all together from the body of sin and from the infirmities of the flesh, so long as they continue in this world."

"Art. II. Hence spring daily sins of infirmity, and hence spots adhere to the best works of the saints, which furnish them with constant matter for humiliation before God, and flying for refuge to Christ crucified; for mortifying the flesh more and more by the spirit of prayer and by holy exercises of piety; and for pressing forward to the goal of perfection, until being at length delivered from this body of death, they are brought to reign with the Lamb of God in heaven."

"Art. III. By reason of these remains of indwelling sin, and the temptation of sin and of the world, those who are converted could not persevere in a state of grace if left to their

own strength. But God is faithful, who having conferred grace, mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end.

"Art IV. Although the weakness of the flesh cannot prevail against the power of God, who confirms and preserves true believers in a state of grace, yet converts are not always so influenced and actuated by the Spirit of God as not in some particular instances sinfully to deviate from the guidance of divine grace, so as to be subdued by, and to comply with, the lust of the flesh; they must therefore be constant in watching and prayer, that they not be led into temptation. When these are neglected, they are not only liable to be drawn into great and heinous sins by Satan, the world, and the flesh, but sometimes by the righteous permission of God actually fall into these evils. This the lamentable fall of David, Peter, and other saints described in the Holy Scriptures, demonstrates."

"Art. V. By such enormous, however, they vary highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes lose the sense of God's favor, for a time, until on their returning into the right way by serious repentance, the light of God's fatherly continence again shines on them."

"Art. VI. But God, who is rich in mercy, according to his unchangeable purpose of election, does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from his own people, even in their melancholy falls; nor suffers them to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption and forfeit the state of justification, or to commit the sin unto death; nor does he permit them to be totally deserted, and to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction."

"Art. VII. For in the first place, in these falls he preserves in them the incorruptible seed of regeneration from perishing or being totally lost; and again, by his Word and Spirit, he certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, to a sincere and Godly sorrow for their sins, that they may seek and obtain remission in the blood of the mediator, may again experience the favor of a reconciled God, through faith adore his mercies, and henceforward more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling."

"Art. VIII. Thus, it is not in consequence of their own merits or strength, but of God's free mercy, that they totally do not fall from faith and grace, nor continue and perish finally in their backsliding; which, with respect to themselves it is not only possible, but would undoubtedly happen; but with respect to God, it is utterly impossible, since his counsel cannot be changed, nor his promise fail, neither can the calling according to his purpose be revoked, nor the merit, intercession, and preservation of Christ be rendered ineffectual, nor the sealing of the Holy Spirit be frustrated or obliterated."

"Art. IX. Of this preservation of the elect to salvation, and of their perseverance in the faith, true believers for themselves may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith, whereby they arrive at the certain persuasion that they ever will continue true and living members of the Church; and that they experience forgiveness of sins, and will at last inherit eternal life."

"Art. X. This assurance, however, is not produced by any peculiar revelation contrary to, or independent of the Word of God, but springs from faith in God's promises, which he has most abundantly revealed in his Word for our comfort; from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with our spirit, that we are children and heirs of God (Rom. viii. 16); and, lastly, from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience, and to perform good works. And if the elect of God were deprived of this solid comfort, that they shall

finally obtain the victory, and of this infallible pledge or earnest of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable."

"Art. XI. The Scripture moreover testifies that believers in this life have to struggle with various carnal doubts and that under grievous temptations, they are not always sensible of this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering. But God, who is the Father off all consolation, does not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it (I Cor.x.13); and by the Holy Spirit again inspires them with the comfortable assurance of persevering."

"Art. XII. This certainty of perseverance, however, is so far from exciting in believers a spirit of pride, or of rendering them carnally secure that, on the contrary, it is the real source of humility, filial reverence, true piety, patience in every tribulation, fervent prayers, constancy in suffering and in confessing the truth, and of solid rejoicing in God; so that the consideration of this benefit should serve as an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works, as appears from the testimony of Scripture and examples of the saints."

"Art. XIII. Neither does renewed confidence of persevering produce licentiousness or a disregard to piety in those who are recovered form backsliding; but it renders them much more careful and solicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord, which he hath ordained, that they who walk therein may maintain an assurance of preserving; lest by abusing his fatherly kindness, God should turn away his gracious countenance from them (to behold which is to the Godly dearer than life, though withdrawing whereof is more bitter than death), and they in consequence thereof should fall into more grievous torments of conscience."

"Art. XIV. And as it hath pleased God, by the preaching of the Gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so he preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of his Word, by meditation thereupon, and by the exhortations, threatening, and promises thereof, as well as the use of the Sacraments."

"Art. XV. The carnal mind is unable to comprehend this doctrine of the Perseverance of the saints, and the certainty thereof, which God hath more abundantly revealed in his Word, for the glory of his name and the consolation of pious souls, which he impresses on the hearts of the faithful. Satan abhors it; the world ridicules it; the ignorant and hypocrite abuse, and heretics oppose it. But the spouse of Christ hath always most tenderly loved and constantly defended it, as an inestimable treasure; and God, against whom neither counsel nor strength can prevail, will dispose her to continue this conduct to the end. Now to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by honor and glory forever. Amen."

These articles are often summarized by the use of the acronym "tulip," standing for Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints. Such an arrangement begins with the sinful condition of man and proceeds from the election of God the Father and the atonement of God the Son to the work of God the Holy Spirit. Thus, it touches on the work of each member of the Trinity in Salvation.

The Historical Development

It is generally assumed that Calvinism is the teachings of John Calvin himself. That is not exactly what happened. As we have seen, John Calvin did not develop Calvinism, nor is all of Calvinism an extension of his thought. Instead, Calvinism developed slowly over a period of about fifty years. As a result of the evolution of Calvin's work and a reaction to it by Arminius, Calvinism, the third major system of salvation, was formulated and formally adopted.

The development of Calvinism from Calvin to Perkins has been given under the development of Arminianism. Therefore, only a brief review of Calvin, Beza, and Perkins will be given here. Then, Ames's contribution will be discussed.

John Calvin As we have seen, John Calvin taught the inability of man to respond to God, double predestination, and irresistible grace. He also taught that faith was a "firm and sure knowledge," that man is passive in the faith experience, and that unregenerate people can have a temporary faith that is not real, faith precedes repentance, faith includes assurance, and genuine believers persevere.

Theodore Beza Calvin's successor at Geneva went beyond his predecessor in several areas. For one thing, he concluded that the decree to predestinate precedes the decree to create, creating what would later be called Supralapsarianism. The logical conclusion was that Christ died only for the elect, a position that would come to be known as Limited Atonement. Beza taught that the preaching of the Law prepares for faith and repentance precedes faith. While he agreed with Calvin that faith is "certain knowledge," he also said that a person had to persuade himself, which implies that faith is an act of the will. He agreed with Calvin that reprobates can have effects similar to the elect, but he departed from Calvin by saying that assurance of salvation comes by reflecting on one's faith and good works.

Beza's departures from Calvin led to the formation of Calvinism, as given in the Canons of Dort. For Calvin, Christ died for the whole world, and when a person experienced faith, which is defined as "firm and sure knowledge," that person automatically had the assurance of salvation. Calvin did, however, teach that an unregenerate person could have a temporary faith. By concluding that Christ died only for the elect, Beza created a practical problem concerning assurance. If Christ died for the whole human race, people can be sure their sins are forgiven when they trust Christ. There is no doubt that Christ paid for their sins because Christ died for the sins of the world. But if Christ only died for the sins of the elect, when people trust in Christ, how do they know their sins are paid for? In other words, how do they know they are one of the elect? The answer produced by the Calvinistic tradition is that people must reflect on their faith and good works. The practical effect is that instead of looking solely to Christ, they must look at themselves.

William Perkins Perkins acknowledges his debt to and dependence on Beza. On the title page of his book, *A Golden Chaine*, he gives Beza credit "for the order of the causes of Salvation and Damnation" (Kendall, pp.54-55). Perkins agreed with his mentor concerning Supralapsarianism, Limited Atonement, the places of the Law in preparing for faith, the nature of faith, and the possibility of a temporary faith, the effects of which look like the elect, which was not real.

Perkins' consuming concern was the assurance of salvation. He taught the "practical syllogism" to assure oneself that one is saved, and he uses the logic that those who truly believe are elected (I believe, therefore, I am elected). Perkins also pointed believers to their works as the basis of the assurance of their salvation. He followed Beza in using 2 Peter 1:10. Kendall concluded that "Perkins' sole authority to the doubting Christian is embodied in 2 Peter 1:10. Perkins claims that 2 Peter 1:10 means 'nothing else but to practice the virtues of the moral law'" (Kendall, p. 74).

William Ames (1576-1633) Perkins' most famous pupil was William Ames (Kendall, p. 151). About 1593, when Perkins' fame was at its peak, Ames attended Cambridge, where he came under Perkins' influence. In fact, Ames was converted under Perkins' ministry. Ames' conversion was described as being "called out of his natural estate of sin & misery, as Lazarus out of his grave, by the loud voice of [Perkins'] powerful ministry." He received a BA in 1597-98 and an MA in 1601. He then taught at Cambridge for nine years. In 1609, he preached a sermon in the University Church, attacking card-playing as no less censurable than open profanity. Because of that sermon, he was suspended from all ecclesiastical and academic duties. He left England for exile in the Netherlands. At the time, a friend warned him to "beware of a strong head and a cold heart" (Kendall, p. 153).

Once in Holland, he engaged in debates with the Remonstrants. In 1618, the Dutch Calvinist party employed Ames to watch the proceedings of the Synod of Dort. He was to advise the Synod. Kendall says, "Ames reportedly exercised enormous power behind the scenes and was an advisor to the president of the Synod. He seems to have distinguished himself at the proceedings" (Kendall, p. 153). From 1622-32, he taught at the University of Franeker. In 1632, he became the pastor of the English Church in Rotterdam. He died in 1633. He wrote a book entitled *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity* (1623, 1627), which became the main textbook at Harvard and (later) Yale (Kendall, p. 154).

According to Kendall, Ames's soteriology [doctrine of salvation] is an "elaborate system that revolves almost entirely around the role of the human will" (Kendall, p. 151). Ames wrote, "Moreover seeing this life [of 'living to God'] is a spiritual act of the whole man, whereby he is carried on to enjoy God and to do according to his will, and it is manifest that those things are proper to the will, it follows that the prime and proper subject of Divinity is the will" (Kendall, p. 157).

1. Predestination. Ames retained Perkins' Supralapsarianism (Kendall. p. 154).
2. Grace. Only efficacious grace will move the will (Kendall, p. 157).
3. Repentance. Ames places repentance before faith. According to Kendall, Ames "makes faith and repentance effectively the same thing." While Ames does make some distinctions between faith and repentance, for example, faith and repentance have different objects and ends, nevertheless, according to Kendall, he "fails to show that there is any real difference between faith and repentance. He effectively equates the two" (Kendall, p. 160).
4. Faith. For Ames, faith is not seated in the understanding. He defines faith as "a resting of the heart on God" or "that act of the will or heart, which properly is called election or choice; whereby we rely upon Christ, repose and rest on him." Ames makes a distinction between implicit faith and explicit faith. Implicit faith is "good and necessary, but it is not of itself sufficient to salvation." It is a "passive" receiving of Christ, an enlightening of the mind. There is no repentance connected with the passive receiving of Christ. Explicit faith is saving faith. Ames wrote, "Explicit Faith must necessarily be had of those things which are propounded to our Faith as necessary means of salvation…

Repentance from dead works and Faith in God.… The outward act of Faith is confession, profession, or manifestation of it, which in its order, and is necessary to salvation, Rom. 10. 9-10" (Kendall, pp. 158-159). But since "the will is the most proper and prime subject of this grace" there must be an "active" receiving of Christ. Faith is not saving until it is an act of the will (Kendall, pp. 159-160). Faith, then, is an act of the will. Granted, efficacious grace is the cause of the will's choice; nevertheless, it is the will that immediately produces faith (Kendall, p. 151). Kendall points out that a contemporary author named Gisbertus Voetius (1588-1676) "observed that while some theologians make faith to reside in the understanding (he cites Perkins and others), and some say faith resides in the intellect *and* the will, he only knew Ames to 'attribute it to the will alone'" (Kendall, p. 152).

5. Temporary Faith. According to Kendall, there is a "near-total eclipse" in Ames' writings concerning temporary faith (Kendall, p. 154). "There is not the remotest hint in Ames' writings that a temporary believer may look like a real Christian" (Kendall, pp. 155-156). In fact, Kendall concludes, "There can be no doubt that Ames deliberately skirts the problem of temporary faith" (Kendall, p. 155). In Kendall's view, this is because Ames "sees the incompatibility of making good works the ground of assurance while simultaneously espousing an explicit doctrine of temporary faith" (Kendall, p.154), "Ames evidently desires a system, however much he respects Perkins, that will be logically consistent throughout. He is not prepared to abandon his predestinarianism, but he is determined to have nothing to do with a system that suggests the reprobate may have sanctification" (Kendall, p. 155; see also p. 156).

6. Assurance. For Calvin, faith itself was assurance, but not for Ames, who said, "A sinner cannot easily persuade himself that he is reconciled to God in Christ before he feels himself to have forsaken those sins which did separate him from God." In other words, repentance must be grasped before there can be assurance of faith. In fact, according to Ames' view, we only know we have faith when we can reflect on the fact that we have repented. We can only know that faith has occurred by our works. Thus, the "whole burden of assurance" is grounded in our works. Good works are "the causes of that knowledge which we have of our calling and election." Ames goes so far as to suggest that "assurance increases and decreases in us, according to our endeavor to abound in virtues, and so do good works is greater or lesser" (Kendall, pp.160-161).

Kendall concludes that Ames' theology is "the eventual product of the Beza-Perkins tradition; it is 'Arminian' in every way but in the theoretical explanation that lies behind the actual practice of the believer (or unbeliever)" (Kendall, p. 157). "William Ames has taken voluntarism (that is, faith as an act of the will in contrast to a passive persuasion in the mind) that was begun in Beza's theology and popularized by Perkins, and brings it to a logical conclusion. Man is thus seen earning God's grace by a willingness to consecrate himself to a Godly life" (Kendall, pp. 162-163). That may sound like an extreme and even unbelievable position, especially coming from someone in the Calvinistic tradition, but that is, in essence, what Ames and many Calvinists have ended up teaching.

Ames himself wrote, "What ought a man to do that he may be translated out of a state of sin, into the state of grace?" He then gave a sevenfold answer: 1) A man must "seriously look into the law of God and make an examination of his life." 2) There must follow a "conviction of conscience." 3) A despair of saving ourselves, and 4) A true humiliation of heart. But this humiliation of heart comes only by 5) "A distinct consideration of some particular sins," if not 6) "by the sight of someone's sin." This humiliation 7) is "helped

forward oft times by some heavy affliction." Those seven steps could all be called preparation.

After all of that is done, Ames asks, "What a man ought to do that he may be partaker of his grace?" Ames gives a fourfold answer to show that there are "diverse duties, which lie upon a man about his vocation [that is, calling], and which both ought, and are wont ordinarily to be performed before the certainty of this grace can be gotten." 1) One must have an estimation of God's word "above all riches." 2) One must "employ his greatest care, labor, and industry, about this business." 3) He must "with all diligence, care, and constancy, apply himself to the use of all those means" which God hath provided. And 4) One must "sell all that he hath to buy this pearl."

That last statement seems to suggest that we bargain with God to obtain grace. Realizing this implication, Ames wrote, "For although God doth freely bestow life upon us, and receives nothing in our hand in lieu of it… yet we ought to forsake all unlawful things actually, and all external and natural goods also, in the purpose, and disposition of our minds, else we cannot obtain the grace of God" (Kendall, pp. 161-162). If this sounds surprising, it should be remembered that for Ames, faith and repentance are acts of the will.

An Evaluation

The Canons of Dort consist of four major headings: predestination, Christ's death, man's corruption, and the saints' perseverance. Within those headings, other subjects about salvation are also discussed. The following evaluation will first consider the topics of the major headings, and then other doctrines of salvation covered in the Canons of Dort will be considered.

Predestination The Canons of Dort claim that election is not based upon foreseen faith but upon the sovereign good pleasure of God's will. As we have seen in our examination of Arminianism, while election is based on foreknowledge (1 Pet. 1:2; Rom. 8:29), the Bible never says exactly what God foreknew. Additionally, it says things that indicate that the basis of God's choice was not man's choice. For example, Romans 9:16 says, "It is not of him who wills." Furthermore, passages like Ephesians 1:5, 11 say that election is "according to the good pleasure of his will." The Canons of Dort correctly conclude that God's election is based on God's good pleasure. God is sovereign in election (Rom. 9:15).

As we have seen, Calvinists before Dort taught double predestination, that is, that God deliberately decreed some to salvation and others to damnation. By saying that God "leaves the non-elect in his just judgment to their own wickedness" (Of divine predestination. Art. VI), the Canons of Dort avoided double predestination. Paul stops short of double predestination. In Romans 9:20-24, he says. "But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?' Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles"?

Notice Paul says God has the right to do whatever He wishes with His creation, but rather than saying that God actually does predestine some to destruction, he only asks the

question, "what if" God wanted to elect some to destruction? Paul does not answer the question. Certainly, he chides man for questioning God's right to do it, but he stops short of saying that God actually does it. So while the Scripture teaches election of the saved, it does not explicitly teach double predestination. Compare that with Perkins' position. According to him, predestination has two parts: Election, "whereby on his own free will, he [God] has ordained certain men to salvation, to the praise of the glory of his grace" and Reprobation, "whereby God, according to the most free and just purpose of his will, has determined to reject certain men unto eternal destruction, and misery, and that to the praise of his justice." Like Calvin and Beza, Perkins taught double predestination (Kendall, p. 57). Dort did not.

The Death of Christ The Canons of Dort state that the death of Christ is "abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world" (Of the death of Christ. Art. III). This statement certainly seems to be teaching Unlimited Atonement. Later, under this heading, the Canons of Dort say that the "saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all of the elect," the blood of the cross "should effectively redeem," "he purchased for them by his death" (Of the death of Christ. Art. VIII). This statement could be interpreted to be teaching Limited Atonement. Indeed, many Calvinists have said that the death of Christ was sufficient for all but only efficient for the elect. The Scripture certainly teaches that, in some sense, Christ died for the whole world (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 2:2). At the same time, the Scripture seems to be saying that the death of Christ actually purchased the redemption of the elect apparently in a way that it did not do for the whole world (Eph. 1:7; 2:13).

The Corruption of Man The Canons of Dort state, "All men are conceived in sin and are by nature of wrath, incapable of any saving good" (Of the corruption of man. Art. III). As we have seen, the essence of the doctrine commonly called "Total Depravity" is that unaided man is incapable of coming to Christ. In a sense, even Arminius agreed!

The Scriptures are clear that unregenerate people have some ability. They can *seek* God so that they might *grope* for Him (Acts 17:26-27). Because of the revelation of God in creation, people can, at least, *understand* that there is a God, Who has power and intelligence (Rom. 1:20). The Scriptures are clear that unsaved people have the ability to respond to God. Jesus says, "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or *whether* I speak on My own *authority*" (Jn. 7:17; see Mt. 23:37). The Scriptures are clear that unbelievers have the ability to believe. In the parable of the Sower, Jesus says, "Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved" (Lk. 8:12). The devil snatches the gospel out of unbelievers' hearts *lest they should believe and be saved*. If Satan did not do that, unbelievers would believe precisely *because* they have the ability to believe (see also Jn. 8:24, 10:25, 12:37). Paul told the Romans, "God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered" (Rom. 6:17). Unbelievers are commanded to believe (Acts 16:31). The Roman unbelievers obeyed that command from the heart.

The Perseverance of the Saints While acknowledging that believers may sin, the Canons of Dort said that God delivers believers "from the dominion and slavery of sin in this life" (Of the perseverance of the saints. Art. I) and that God would not suffer a believer "to commit the sin unto death" (Of the perseverance of the saints. Art. VI). Moreover, God "certainly and effectively renews them [believers who fall] to repentance" (Of the

perseverance of the saints. Art. VII), and "it is utterly impossible" for a believer to "fall from faith and grace" (Of the perseverance of the saints. Art. VIII).

In the first place, the Scripture does teach that a believer can be a slave to sin. Granted, because of what all believers are and have in Christ, they should not let sin reign in their life. Believers do not have to sin; they can have victory over sin (Rom. 6:1-14). Nevertheless, no less than the Apostle Paul said of himself, "I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14). He spoke of himself being brought "into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7:23).

The Scripture teaches believers that they can commit a sin unto death. Paul addressed the book of Romans "to all who are in Rome, beloved of God called to be saints" (Rom. 1:7). He called them "brethren" (Rom. 12:1), yet he plainly said to them, "If you live according to the flesh you will die" (Rom. 8:13). There can be no doubt that by "you" he meant believers, for he addressed this verse to "brethren" (Rom. 8:12). John concurs that a "brother" can commit a sin leading to death (1. Jn. 5:16). So does James (Jas. 1:13-16, 5:20). Paul told the Corinthians that because they partook of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner "many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:30), which means that because of this sin some believers at Corinth experienced a premature physical death. Ananias and Sapphira were guilty of a sin, which led to their premature physical death (Acts 5:1-11).

Within the major headings, other doctrines of salvation are mentioned. Let's consider some of them.

Effective call The Canons of Dort speak of something that has been called by various names, including Efficacious Grace and Irresistible Grace. Under the heading entitled, "Of the corruption of man, his conversion to God, and the manner thereof," the Canons state, "As many as are called by the gospel are unfeignedly called; for God hath most earnestly and truly declared in his Word what will be acceptable to him, namely, that all who are called should comply with the invitation" ("Of the corruption of man," Art. VIII). "But that others who are called by the Gospel obey the call and are converted, is not to be ascribed to the proper exercise of free-will, …but it must be wholly ascribed to God, who, as he hath chosen his own from eternity in Christ, so he [calls them effectively in time] confers upon them faith and repentance" ("Of the corruption of man," Art. X). "But when God accomplishes his good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, he not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds by his Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God, but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit he pervades the innermost recesses of the man; he opens the closed and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised; infuses new qualities into the will, which though hithertofore, dead, he quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, he renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that, like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions" ("Of the corruption of man," Art. XI).

As was pointed out, the plain statement of Scripture is that people can resist the work of the Holy Spirit (see Mt. 23:37; Jn. 5:38-40; Acts 7:51, 13:46).

Faith The Canons of Dort teach that faith is a gift. "Faith is, therefore, to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure, but because it is in reality conferred, breathed, and infused into him. (Of the corruption of man. Art. XIV). The Scriptures do not teach that faith is a gift.

The verse most often used to teach this idea, Ephesians 2:8, does not support this concept. Ephesians 2:8 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God…" In Ephesians 2:8, "it," which is neuter, does not refer to "faith," which is feminine. The word "it" refers to salvation (Rom. 6:23).

Assurance The Canons of Dort make several statements concerning assurance. Under the heading "Of divine predestination," the Canons state, "The elect, in due time, though in various degrees and in different measures, attain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election, not by inquisitively prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves, with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure, the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God; such as a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a Godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc." (Of divine predestination. Art. XII).

Then, under the last heading, which is on perseverance, the Canons of Dort say, "Of this preservation of the elect to salvation, and of their perseverance in the faith, true believers for themselves may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith, whereby they arrive at the certain persuasion that they ever will continue true and living members of the Church; and that they experience forgiveness of sins, and will at last inherit eternal life" (Of the perseverance of the saints. Art. IX). This assurance, however, is not produced by any peculiar revelation contrary to, or independent of the Word of God, but springs from faith in God's promises, which he has most abundantly revealed in his Word for our comfort; from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with our spirit, that we are children and heirs of God (Rom. viii. 16); and, lastly, from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience, and to perform good works. And if the elect of God were deprived of this solid comfort, that they shall finally obtain the victory, and of this infallible pledge or earnest of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable" (Of the perseverance of the saints. Art X). The Canons of Dort had people observing themselves to find assurance, whereas the Scripture instructs people to believe in the name of the Son of God so that they may *know* that they have eternal life (1 Jn. 5:13).

Summary: The Calvinists system of salvation says man, who is incapable of any saving good without regenerating grace, is saved because 1) God decreed to save some based solely on His good pleasure (that is, not based on anything in man), 2) while Christ died sufficiently for the whole world, He died effectively to redeem those chosen to salvation, and 3) the Holy Spirit, who cannot be resisted, pervades the innermost recesses, infuses new qualities into the will, quickens and infuses faith into the individual, and even though true believers can fall into sin, they can never be totally lost because the Holy Spirit will renew such them to repentance. Calvinism is biblical in that it recognizes that God sovereignly elects individuals, but in several places, it misrepresents the Scripture.

THE TRUE GRACE SYSTEM OF SALVATION

There are several problems with the systems of salvation that organized groups within Christendom have formally adopted. In the first place, each system was formulated as a reaction to another system! Although elements of it existed before, the Sacramental system of salvation was formally spelled out as a reaction to the Protestant Reformation. The Arminian system, likewise, was devised as a reaction to the Calvinism of Beza. The standard statement of Calvinism, Dortism, was crafted as a reaction to Arminianism. In other words, all three major Christian systems of salvation were a reaction to something else.

Another problem is that once a system is adopted, advocates of that system interpret Scripture in light of their system. A respected theologian actually criticized a system of salvation he opposed because those who accepted it followed the universally accepted norms for interpreting Scripture and not according to a system he thought was scriptural! Charles Hodge, the famous Calvinist theologian, said, "They (Arminians) seem to regard it as a proof of independence to make each passage mean simply what the grammatical structure and logical connection indicate, without the least regard to the analogy of Scripture" (Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, p. 167). This is an unbelievable statement, especially coming from a theologian. He is actually accusing the Arminians of interpreting Scripture according to its grammatical and contextual structure rather than a theological system he thinks is the system of Scripture. Of course, the proponents of each system will argue that their system is an accurate reflection of the biblical data, but as we have seen from a biblical evaluation, it is evident that in each system, passage after passage is misinterpreted to fit the system.

What is needed is an examination of all pertinent passages in context *without* regard to a theological system. *After that is done,* a theological system needs to be constructed. I was once part of a group of pastors examining a potential candidate for ordination. All the pastors, including the candidate, believed in Eternal Security. At one point, the candidate was asked to explain Hebrews 6, one of the great battlegrounds of New Testament interpretation concerning Eternal Security. The candidate said he wasn't sure what that passage said. Some of the pastors began to argue that since the doctrine of Eternal Security was true, he should know the explanation of Hebrews 6. The candidate would not budge from his position. Finally, I said to the group that he is correct. If the proper interpretation of Hebrews 6 denies the doctrine of Eternal Security, we need to rethink the doctrine of Eternal Security!

Contextual study must precede the construction of a theological system.

I have personally spent over 50 years studying the Bible, one book at a time, in the context of that book. I've done a detailed study of each book of the New Testament as well as almost all of the books of the Old Testament [Since I wrote this material, I have finished the Old Testament]. In the process, I have been forced to change my opinion on some of my theological presuppositions, such as the doctrine of election and my understanding of the concept of elders in the local church. I have also had some of my theological positions confirmed, such as the doctrine of Eternal Security.

So, after years of studying the Bible in context, here are my conclusions about what the Bible teaches concerning salvation. I call it the "True Grace" system." Not all advocates

within the grace framework will agree with me. There are differences within the grace movement, just as there are within Calvinism and Arminianism. The most defining issue in the grace movement is the absolute freeness of salvation, which includes assurance of salvation and Eternal Security. Among those who teach the absolute freedom of salvation, there is disagreement concerning what happens after salvation.

An Explanation

The True Grace system of salvation is that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone, plus nothing; that assurance is the essence of faith; that those who believe are eternally secure, even though they may not endure to the end of their lives; that believers who persevere are blessed in this life and rewarded in the next, and that those who don't persevere are disciplined in this life and lose rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

True Grace teaches that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone. Virtually all Protestants agree that salvation is by faith alone, but, as they say, the devil is in the details. The critical issues are the definition of "faith" and the definition of "repentance."

1. Faith. Only one book in the Bible says it was written to tell people how to have eternal life. That book is the Gospel of John. John 20:31 says, "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." In the Gospel of John, the word used to tell people what they must do to have eternal life is the verb "believe." The noun "faith" does not appear in the Gospel of John at all, although it is used outside of John to describe what a person must do to be saved (Eph. 2:8).

The Greek verb translated "believe" means "to be convinced of something, trust" (Arndt and Gingrich, pp. 660-662). The Greek noun rendered "faith" means "trust, confidence, faith" (Arndt and Gingrich, p. 662). In other words, the Greek words for "believe" and "faith" have two basic elements: mental assent and reliance. Those two elements assume knowledge. Obviously, we must know about something before we can believe it. The Scripture says, "How shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?" (Rom. 10:14). Utilizing this assumption, Charles Hodge, the famous Princeton theologian, says: "The faith, therefore, which is connected with salvation, includes knowledge, that is, a perception of the truth and its qualities; assent, or the persuasion of the truth of the object of faith; and trust, or reliance. The exercise, or state of mind expressed by the word faith, as used in the Scriptures, is not mere mental assent or mere trust; it is the intelligent perception, reception, and reliance on the truth as revealed in the gospel" (Hodge on Romans, p. 29).

If the Greek words "believe/faith" mean to believe that something is true, what is it that must be accepted as true? The short answer is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Jn. 20:31). Peter's confession was, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:16). Martha said something similar: "I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is come into the world" (Jn. 11:27). The Ethiopian eunuch told Philip, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37 NKJV; this verse is only in a few manuscripts). There are other verses that say the content of belief is believing Jesus is the Christ (see 1 Jn. 2:22 and 1 Jn. 5:1).

What is involved in believing that Jesus is the Christ? Jesus said that the Old Testament taught that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day

(Lk. 24:46). To believe that Jesus is the Son of God is to believe that He is God the Son (Jn. 1:1, 14). According to the New Testament, there are four things about Christ that are said to be the objects of faith, namely, 1) that Christ is God (Jn. 20:31), and yet 2) a real man (1 Jn. 4:2), 3) that Christ died for sin (Rom. 3:25), and 4) rose from the dead (Rom. 10:9). Peter says Gentiles heard the "word of the gospel and believed" (Acts 15:7; for a definition of the gospel see 1 Cor. 15:3-4).

Faith includes believing facts, but there is more to faith than believing facts; it is trusting, in the case of salvation, in the person of Jesus Christ. As was stated earlier, both the Greek verb translated "believe" and the Greek noun translated "faith" both mean "to trust." As if to emphasize the point, a preposition is sometimes added after the word "believe." For example, John 3:16 says, "Whoever believes in Him" and Acts 16:31 says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." To be even more specific, it is believing in Jesus Christ *for eternal life* (1 Tim. 1:16; for a detailed discussion of the word "believe" in the Gospel of John, including a detailed discussion of the preposition added to believe, see G. Michael Cocoris, *Belief in the Gospel of John*).

2. Repentance. The New Testament teaches that repentance is a condition of salvation (Lk. 24:47; 2 Pet. 3:9). That poses a problem. The only book in the New Testament written to tell people how to have eternal life is the Gospel of John, but the word "repent" does not occur even once in the fourth Gospel. That is particularly striking in light of the fact that in two different places, the book deals with the ministry of John the Baptist, whose message, according to the Synoptics, could be summarized by the word "repent." Furthermore, Romans is the book in the New Testament that gives the most detailed discussion of salvation. One chapter in Romans, namely Romans 4, discusses the one thing people must do to be justified (declared righteous before God). The only thing mentioned in Romans 4 that a person must do to be justified before God is to have faith. The word "repentance" only occurs once in Romans.

So, the New Testament teaches that both repentance and faith are necessary for salvation, but the occurrences of repent/repentance provoke some questions. Why doesn't the word "repent" appear in the one and only book in the Bible written to tell people how to have eternal life? How does one explain the New Testament's various combinations of faith and repentance? In most instances, faith is the one and the only requirement for salvation (Jn.; Rom. 4). In a few cases, repentance is the one and only stated requirement for salvation (Acts 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9). Only rarely do the two terms appear together (only three times: Mk. 1:15; Acts 20:21; Heb. 6:1).

To unravel this puzzle, one must begin with a definition of "repentance." The Greek word translated "repent" means "to change one's mind" (the Greek word is made up of two words, namely "after" and "mind," meaning "afterthought" or "change of mind;" the meaning of a word, however, is not determined by its root, but by its usage). It describes an inward change of thinking or attitude. Mantey says, "It means to think differently or have a different attitude toward sin and God, etc." (Mantey, p. 193). In his commentary on Hebrews, Westcott, the famous Greek scholar, says, "It follows, therefore, that 'Repentance from dead works' expresses that complete change of mind—of spiritual attitude—which leads the believer to abandon these works and seek some other support for life" (Westcott, p. 144). Another scholar, Alfred Plummer, calls repentance "an inward change of mind" (Plummer on Lk., p. 86).

What is the content of repentance in the New Testament? In one passage, God is the object of repentance (Acts 20:21). In another, Christ is the object (Acts 2:38). Concerning Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, William Evans said, "He virtually called upon them to change their minds and their views regarding Christ. They had considered Christ to be a mere man, a blasphemer, an imposter. The events of the few preceding days had proven to them that he was none other than the righteous Son of God, their Savior and the Savior of the world. The result of their repentance or change of mind would be that they would receive Jesus Christ as their long-promised Messiah" (Evans, p. 140). In still other passages, the content of repentance is works (Heb. 6:1; Rev. 9:20; 16:11; etc.). The Scripture also speaks of repenting of sin (Rev. 9:21).

It should be noted that in no passage is any individual ever told to repent of all four things: a wrong view of God, a wrong view of Christ, dead works, and sin. In other words, if a person has a wrong view of God, that individual must repent concerning God. If a person has a correct view of God and an incorrect view of Christ, that individual needs to repent concerning Christ. Likewise, an erroneous view of works or not taking sin seriously means a person needs to repent concerning dead works and sin.

How are the various combinations of faith and repentance in the New Testament to be explained? As we have seen, faith and repentance are not synonymous. Their definitions and the fact that they appear together on at least a few occasions indicate this. In light of the doctrine of justification by faith, the few times repentance occurs alone, it must include faith. In the New Testament sense of the word, to repent, that is, to change one's mind about God, Christ, dead works, or sin, includes faith in those passages where repentance appears alone. Likewise, when faith occurs alone, it must include repentance. After all, faith is a change of mind from unbelief to belief in Christ.

So intertwined are the words faith and repentance that the New Testament does not hesitate to use them interchangeably. In Acts 10, Peter told the people in Cornelius' house to believe (Acts 10:43), but after he reported this event to the brethren at Jerusalem, they concluded that God had granted the people in Cornelius' house "repentance to life" (Acts 11:18). Concerning faith and repentance, Calvin concluded that "although they cannot be separated, they ought to be distinguished" (Calvin, *Institutes*, III, III, 5). Berkhof, Chafer, and others have also concluded that faith and repentance cannot be separated (Berkhof, p. 487; Chafer, vol. III, p. 373). Spurgeon made a valid point when he said, "It is a great mystery; faith is before repentance in some of its aspects, and repentance before faith in another view of it; the fact being that they come into the soul together….They are twins, and to say which is the elder born passes my knowledge" (Spurgeon, vol. V111, p. 402).

For an examination of every occurrence of the word repent and repentance in the New Testament, see G. Michael Cocoris, *Repentance: The Most Misunderstood Word in the Bible*.

True Grace teaches that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone, plus nothing. While agreeing that salvation is by faith, some want to add something to faith. The additions include such things as being sorry for sin, turning from sin, submitting to the Lordship of Christ, confessing Christ, and being baptized.

1. Being sorry for sin. Some Bible teachers say that the word repent means to be sorry for sin. In the New Testament, repentance does not mean being sorry for sin. That is proven by Paul saying, "Your sorrow led to repentance" (2 Cor. 7:9). According to Paul, sorrow may *lead* to repentance; sorrow may even accompany repentance, but *sorrow is not part of*

repentance. The fact that sorrow led to repentance in the case of the Corinthians does not mean that sorrow must always precede repentance. Paul told the Romans that the goodness of God can lead to repentance (Rom. 2:4). Furthermore, there is another Greek word that means "to regret" (*metamelomai*). That word is never used of salvation in the New Testament.

2. Turning from sin. Some pastors argue that the word repent means to turn from sin. In the New Testament, repentance is not turning from sin. In Acts 26:20, Paul says that the Gentiles should "repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance." In the first place, he makes repenting and turning two entirely different things. Moreover, he says that after they repent, they should bring forth works that fit the nature of their repentance. This is an echo of what John the Baptist said. He told his audience that they should repent and "bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Lk. 3:8). The fact that the New Testament talks about repenting and then bringing forth works or fruit as something fitting the repentance is proof that repentance is not turning from sin. In his commentary on Luke 3:8, Lenski points out that "repentance cannot be meant by 'fruits.' [Repentance] is invisible; hence we judge its presence by the [fruits], which are visible" (Lenski, p. 188). Berkhof concurs, "According to the Scriptures, repentance is wholly an inward act and should not be confounded with the change of life that proceeds from it. Confession of sin and reparation of wrongs are *fruits* of repentance" (Berkhof, p. 487).

The objection to repentance being a change of mind is that some Greek lexicons say it means to turn or to be converted. Arndt and Gingrich define repent/repentance as "a change of mind, remorse, a turning about, conversion" (Arndt and Gingrich, pp. 511-512). As surprising as this may sound to some, this is a case where the lexicons are wrong!

The 10-volume set *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Kittel) is widely used as a lexicon for the meaning of Greek words in the New Testament. The problem with using that work as a lexicon is that Kittel says his purpose is not lexicography in the sense of deriving meanings from dictionaries and concordance use. Instead, his purpose is to present the theological idea behind a word. Dillow observes, "The result is that we do not always get from Kittel the meaning of the word but the theology of it as perceived by the writer of that particular article. Users of this dictionary often make the mistake of citing Kittel as a lexical rather than a theological authority" (Dillow, p. 29).

James Barr has severely criticized the methodology used in Kittel (James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Languages.* London: Oxford Press, 1961). Barr accuses the authors of Kittel of "illegitimate totality transfer," by which he means that the authors transfer all the meanings of a word to each occurrence of the word.

For example, Behm's article in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* claims that repentance "demands radical conversion, a transformation of nature, a definitive turning from evil, a resolute turning to God in total obedience" (Behm, TDNT, vol. 4, p. 1002, cited by Dillow, p. 30). In making such a statement, Behm does not define the word "repent." He *brings to* the discussion the idea that conversion and repentance are interchangeable ideas (Dillow, p. 30).

Behm admits that in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint, LXX), the Greek word translated "repent" is rare and is used for "to regret" and "to change one's mind." He also admits that the Greek world offers no true linguistic basis for the New Testament understanding of "repent" as conversion. Then, after acknowledging that neither the Old Testament nor the Greek word gives any basis for equating repentance with

conversion or turning from sin, he concludes that he will interpret the New Testament usage of the word in light of the Old Testament *concept* of conversion, but he gives no evidence that repentance and conversion are ever equated in the Old Testament (Dillow, pp. 30-31)!

Behm does the same thing with the New Testament. He assumes repentance means conversion, finds a passage that contains the word conversion and says it defines repentance! For example, Matthew 13:3 says, "Unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." Behm says the word translated "converted" means to repent, but the word repent does not appear anywhere in this passage. Furthermore, becoming like a little child does not mean turning from sin; it means being humble and trusting like a child. Children are not normally viewed as needing to turn from sin (Dillow, p. 31fn).

Saur, a Calvinist, says, "Behm commits a lexical *faux pas* that has far-reaching consequences in his article on repentance" (R. C. Saur, "A Critical and Exegetical Re-examination of Hebrews 5:11-6:8, a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Manchester, 1981, p. 305, cited by Dillow, p. 31).

The data from the New Testament is unmistakable. Repentance is an inward change of mind or attitude, not including sorrow or turning from sin. The proof that repentance does not mean being sorry for sin or turning from sin is that in the Old Testament, God "repents"! In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX), the Greek word for "repent" appears in Jonah 3:9-10, 4:2. In all three cases, God is changing His mind about destroying Nineveh (see also 1 Sam. 15:29; Jer. 4:27- 28; Joel 2:13-14; Amos 7:3). In the King James Version of the Old Testament, the word repent occurs forty-six times. In thirty-seven of those times, God is the one who is said to be either repenting or not repenting.

In fact, the word repent does not necessarily even deal with sin. There is a case in the first century where "Plutarch tells of two murderers, who having spared a child, afterward, 'repented' and sought to slay it" (Trench, p. 258). In other words, the word repent means to change one's mind and the content of what a person changes his or her mind about is not a part of the meaning. It is like the word dozen, which means twelve. A farmer might use the word dozen to refer to twelve eggs and a baker may use the word to refer to twelve cookies. The word dozen simply means twelve; it has nothing to do with eggs or cookies. R. A. Torrey said it clearly, "What the repentance, or change of mind, is about must always be determined by the context" (Torrey, p. 355).

3. Deciding to obey. Some preachers claim that faith includes obedience. They maintain that obedience is part of the definition of faith. They also use the expression "obedience of faith" in Romans 1:5 to support their claim. As has been pointed out, the definition of faith does not include obedience. The expression "obedience of faith" means "obedience which consists of faith" (Murray on Romans), not faith which consists of obedience. In other words, God commands people to believe (Acts 16:31; see also 2 Pet. 3:9). Faith obeys that command.

4. Submitting to the Lordship of Christ. Some teachers insist that submitting to the Lordship of Christ is necessary for salvation. After all, does not the Bible say, believe on the *Lord* Jesus Christ and you will be saved? Many scholars, including B. B. Warfield and J. Gresham Machen, have said the word "Lord," when used of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, simply means that He is God (for the details, see G. Michael Cocoris, *Lordship Salvation: Is it Biblical?*).

In the Old Testament, there are three Hebrew words used for God: Elohim (translated "God"), Yahweh (translated "LORD"), and Adonai (translated "Lord"). The Jews did not want to pronounce the personal name of God (Yahweh), so they said, "Adonai" (Lord). In New Testament times, any Jew hearing the word "Lord" immediately understood that it was a reference to God. In other words, the word "Lord" in the title "Lord Jesus Christ" is saying that Jesus Christ is God, not that He is a master to whom submission must be given. In fact, another Greek word means "master," which is not used in any passage pertaining to salvation.

5. Confessing Christ. Some evangelists declare that confessing Christ is necessary for salvation. They quote Matthew 10:32 and Romans 10:9. Jesus said, "Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before my Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 10:32). In that passage, Jesus is not talking about salvation; He is talking about discipleship (Mt. 10:37-40) and rewards (Mt. 10:41).

Paul writes, "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Rom. 10:9). Paul goes on to explain (see "for" at the beginning of verse 10), "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness and the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10). Notice that in Paul's explanation, he says that people *believe unto righteousness*. The Greek word translated "righteousness" is a form of the Greek word "justification." In other words, when people believe, they are justified, which means they are declared righteous. Then, *after they are justified*, they will be saved if they confess. What does Paul mean by "salvation" in this passage?

All theologians recognize that in the New Testament, there are three aspects to salvation. Believers *are saved* (past tense) from the penalty of sin (justification). They *are being saved* (present tense) from the power of sin (progressive sanctification). They *will be saved* (future tense) from the presence of sin (glorification) in heaven. It is obvious that Paul is not referring to the first aspect of salvation (justification) in Romans 10:9-10 because he clearly says that aspect of salvation is obtained by believing in the heart. Therefore, in Romans 10:9-10, Paul talks about the second aspect of salvation, the deliverance from the power of sin.

In the same passage, Paul says, "For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then, shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:13-14). Notice the progression: hear, believe (at which point a person is justified, 10:10), and call. Calling on the Lord comes *after* belief and is part of "the spiritual life." Peter speaks of being holy and he immediately follows that by talking about calling on the Father (1 Pet. 1:15-17). Calling on the Lord is not a condition for justification; it is a requirement for sanctification (see Heb. 4:16).

6. Being baptized. Some Bible students assert that baptism is necessary for salvation. Many passages are used to support that notion. An examination of those passages demonstrates that they are saying people need to be baptized *because* they have been saved, or those passages talk about spiritual baptism, not water baptism. An explanation of all of those passages is beyond the scope of this study (for a detailed discussion of baptism, see G. Michael Cocoris, "Is Baptism Necessary for Salvation?").

One of the passages in the New Testament that demonstrates that baptism is not necessary for salvation is in Acts 10. Preaching to the Gentiles in Cornelius's house, Peter

said, "Whoever believes in Him will receive the remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). Then, *after the Holy Spirit* fell on all those who heard Peter's message (Acts 10:44), Peter said, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" (Acts 10:47). Clearly, these people were saved; they received the Holy Spirit *before* they were baptized.

7. Becoming a disciple. Some authors teach that people must become disciples to be saved. The Greek word translated "disciple" means "learner." There is a difference between being a believer and being a learner. People are "justified freely (without cost) by His grace" (Rom. 3:24; Rev. 22:17); salvation is a gift (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8), but in order to be a disciple (a learner), one must "count the cost" (Lk. 14:26-33) of hating father and mother (Lk. 14:26), bearing a cross (Lk. 14:27), and forsaking all (Lk. 14:33). How can salvation be a gift that is without cost if one has to give up everything to get it?

The point is that *salvation is absolutely free. It is simply and solely by faith alone in Christ alone, plus nothing.* Some Protestants say they believe justification is by faith but want to front-load the gospel with things a person must do to be justified. The issue is not just justification by faith; it is justification by faith *alone,* plus nothing. Paul plainly says, "But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness" (Rom 4:5). Note: "To him who does not work!"

True Grace teaches assurance is bound up in faith. The one book in the New Testament that directly addresses the question of assurance of salvation is 1 John. In chapter 2, John urges his readers to abide in that which they heard from the beginning (1 Jn. 2:24). Then he says, "This is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life" (1 Jn. 2:25). John is reminding them that part of the message they heard from the beginning of their Christian experience was the promise of eternal life based on the message about Christ (1 Jn. 2:24), namely, that He is the Christ (1 Jn. 2:22), the Son of God (1 Jn. 2:22) who is come in the flesh (1 Jn. 1:1-4; 4:2). In short, God promises eternal life.

In other words, when people believe in Christ for eternal life, they are believing God's promise of eternal life (Abraham's faith was believing God's promise; see Rom. 4:20-22). They have God's word on it. Hence, assurance of salvation is taking God at His Word (His promise). From the instance of faith, assurance is sure because what you believe is that God promises you eternal life.

Later in the book, John adds, "And this is the testimony that God has given us, eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things have I written unto you that believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 Jn. 5:11-13). What is this passage saying about assurance? To answer that question, consider the context of these verses.

There are two types of problems with assurance. One is objective. The issues are: Is Christianity true? Is Jesus Christ the Son of God? Was He born in human flesh? Did He die? Did He rise from the grave? The second type of problem with assurance is subjective. The questions are: Am I a Christian? How do I know I have eternal life? In this passage, John presents objective evidence for who Christ is and what He did (1 Jn. 5:6-8). The antichrists denied Jesus was the Christ come in the flesh. They denied that He died. John proves Christ was the Son of God come in the flesh and that He actually died by pointing to Christ's baptism (He came in the flesh) and Christ's blood (He died). He had to have come in the flesh to have been baptized, bled, and died. John presents the Christ of truth

over against the antichrists of error. Having established the truth about Christ, John points to the testimony of God, which promised eternal life to all who believe. He assures all who believe that they can *know* that they have eternal life (1 Jn. 5:13). Assurance is not presumptuous; it is what God wants us to have! This passage, then, deals with the objective problem of assurance. To solve that problem, John points to the proofs of Who Christ is and to God's promise of eternal life to all who believe.

Many use 1 John 5:13 to establish some kind of subjective assurance. Some of them assume that the phrase "these things" in verse 13 refers to the whole book and conclude that the way to know that one has eternal life is to believe in the Son, live a righteous life, and love the brethren. Such a conclusion is a mishandling of the phrase and a misunderstanding of the epistle. The phrase "these things I have written" refers to the immediately preceding material, just as similar expressions throughout the epistle do (1 Jn. 1:4; 2:1, 2:12-14, 2:21, 2:26; see Brooks; 1 Jn. 5:13 obviously picks up the immediately preceding subject, see "eternal life" in verse 11). Thus, this verse cannot be used to say that fruit/works are the basis of assurance.

John is writing about Jesus Christ and God's testimony (1 Jn. 5:6-12) was designed to assure his readers that regardless of what the antichrists said, believers do indeed possess eternal life. John is not writing to persuade unbelievers to believe. He is writing to those who have believed so that can be assured that they have eternal life. The basis of assurance is to take God at His Word. Those who believe in Christ can know they have eternal life. God said so. As has often been said, "God said it; I believe it; that settles it." Paul could say, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Tim. 1:12).

Like many other Christians, Martin Luther was plagued by continual doubts over his salvation. In one of his moods of depression, he felt as if Satan himself was closing in on him. It seemed as if the devil was whispering in his ear, "Martin, do you feel your sins are forgiven?" Suddenly, Luther rose to his feet and shouted out loud, "No, I don't, but I know that they are because God says so in His Word." The primary means of assurance is to take God at His Word.

True Grace teaches Eternal Security. God promised eternal life (1 Jn. 2:25). Faith is believing the promise of God (Rom. 4:20-22). Therefore, believers can know from the moment of faith that they are eternally secure because God promised it to those who believe (Jn. 3:16). God promised *eternal* life, not temporary life.

Jesus Himself said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (Jn. 5:24). Believers have passed from death to life and will *not come into judgment*. There are two different judgments of individuals. All *believers* will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, where rewards will be determined (1 Cor. 3:11-15). All *unbelievers* will appear before the Great White Throne Judgment, and all who appear at that judgment will be cast into the eternal lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15). Since all believers must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom 14:10), Jesus could not possibly be referring to that judgment for believers. He is talking about the Great White Throne Judgment, where eternal destiny is the issue. Therefore, John 5:24 promises that those who truly trust Christ will be given eternal life, and they will not stand before the Great White Throne Judgment, where the eternal destiny of individuals is the issue.

Furthermore, believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption. Paul says, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice" (Eph. 4:30-31). In a context where Paul acknowledges the possibility of believers grieving the Holy Spirit with sin, he still insists that they are sealed until the day of redemption. Sin does not break the seal.

Numerous theories as to what believers must do to lose their salvation have been proposed. Some say that a particular kind of sin can cause a loss of salvation. Others claim when believers cease to believe, salvation is lost.

For example, someone might argue that the sins in Ephesians 4 are "minor" as compared to "major" sins like sexual immorality. Can a major sin cause believers to lose their salvation? In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul speaks about a believer (1 Cor. 5:5) who is living in sexual immorality with his stepmother (1 Cor. 5:1)! This situation is so bad that Paul says that not even unsaved people do it (1 Cor. 5:1)! Paul commands the Corinthian church to "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5). The expression "destruction of the flesh" either means the destruction of the sinful nature or the destruction of the physical body, that is, physical death. Since the Holy Spirit, not Satan, is the one who deals with the sinful flesh in the believer (Gal. 5:16), this verse must refer to the premature physical death of a believer who has committed the sin unto death. In other words, Paul contemplates the possibility that a believer can commit a gross sin, not repent of that sin, even die in that sin and yet "be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5). Our sin does not break His seal.

What about the possibility of a believer ceasing to believe? Is such a believer still secure? In the first place, there is the promise of Christ that a person who has exercised faith has passed from death to life and shall not come into judgment (Jn. 5:24). Whether or not believers continue to believe is not the condition of the promise that they will not come into judgment. Be that as it may, Paul speaks directly to the possibility of believers not believing any longer. He says, "This is a faithful saying: for if we died with Him, we shall live with him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:11-13). According to Paul, if believers are faithless, God remains faithful because He cannot deny the promises He has made. Our unbelief does not break His promise.

For an examination of all major passages concerning the doctrine of Eternal Security, see G. Michael Cocoris, "Eternal Security."

True Grace teaches that believers should grow in grace, but they may not. Believers *should* grow in grace, bear fruit, produce good works, endure to the end of their lives, and have victory over sin, but they may not. Each of these needs to be examined.

1. Growth. Believers *should* grow *in grace*. As believers stand before God, they stand in grace (Rom. 5:2) united to Christ (Rom. 6:3-5). They are alive to God (Rom. 6:11). They have access to grace (Rom. 5:2) in which (2 Pet. 3:18) and by which (Heb. 4:16) they *should* grow to Christ-like maturity.

Paul *commands* those changed believers to reckon themselves dead to sin and alive to God (Rom. 6:11) and to not allow the members of their body to be instruments of sin (Rom. 6:12-13a), but to present their members as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:13b). Throughout the epistles, believers are repeatedly commanded to put off sin (Eph. 4:22, etc.)

and put on godly virtues (Eph. 4:24; etc.). In other words, for believers to grow in grace, they must cooperate with the work of the Lord in their lives and *obey* (Rom. 6:12, 16). Believers grow as they are obedient to the Word of God by being dependent on the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:4). They do this by coming boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16). For a detailed explanation of the spiritual life, see G. Michael Cocoris, "How to Live a Biblocl; Spiritual life."

Believers are under grace, not under any of the Mosaic Law, including the moral law (the Ten Commandments), including the Saturday Sabbath. Romans teaches that believers are not under the Mosaic Law and mentions coveting (Rom. 7:7), which is part of the Ten Commandments. Second Corinthians says the Mosaic Law is passing away and specifically speaks that which was "written and engraved in stone" (2 Cor. 3:7); that is, the Ten Commandments. Galatians says believers are not under the Mosaic Law and specifically mentions the Sabbath (Gal. 4:10-11), which is part of the Ten Commandments. Colossians says the Law has been wiped out, taken out of the way and talks about "the handwriting of requirements" (Col. 2:14), a reference to the Ten Commandments.

Does this mean that believers are lawless? NO! Believers are under the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21), which is love and fulfills the Law (Rom. 13:8, 10; Gal. 5:13-14). "Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore, love *is* the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:10). For example, the Mosaic Law says, "Do not steal," but there is no power in the Mosaic Law to keep that law; if believers practice love, they will not steal. Loving God and other people by God's grace fulfills God's moral law.

The sad reality is that some believers do not grow. They may remain carnal. Five years after they were converted, Paul told the Corinthians they were still babes (1 Cor. 3:1-2), behaving like unsaved people (1 Cor. 3:3)! The writer to the Hebrews told his original readers that they had been saved long enough that they should be teachers (Heb. 5:12), but they were still babes who needed to be taught the basics (Heb. 5:12-14). Peter warned believers about being led astray and not growing. He wrote, "You, therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:17-18).

2. Fruit. Believers *should* bear fruit. The point of the parable of the Sower is that the good soil produces fruit, as it *should* (Lk. 8:15). For believers to produce fruit, they must cooperate with the Lord; they must abide in Christ (Jn. 15:4) and His Word (Jn. 15:7). Consequently, there are levels of fruit (see "some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" in Mt. 13:23 and no fruit, "fruit," "more fruit," and "much fruit" in Jn. 15:1-5). The degree of fruit-bearing depends on the degree of cooperation.

Unfortunately, some believers do not produce fruit. Jesus plainly says, "Every branch in me that does not bear fruit" (Jn. 15:2; although most commentators deny that this verse is talking about genuine believers, it is evident that it is because Jesus says these branches are "in Me"). Peter also talks about the possibility of believers being "unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:8). Some fruit trees do not produce fruit but are still fruit trees.

3. Good works. Believers *should* produce good works. Paul says that believers were "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we *should* walk in them" (Eph. 2:10, italics added; note Paul says "should," not "will"). If believers are to produce good works, they must cooperate with the Lord and work at it. Paul says, "I

want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God *should* be careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8, italics added; note, Paul says "should," not "will"). Titus was to *remind them to produce good works constantly*, and they were exhorted to be careful when doing so. The Greek word translated "careful" denotes earnest and careful thought, even straining. In other words, good works do not just automatically happen. Believers have to cooperate with the Lord; they have to put forth effort.

Regrettably, some believers do not produce works of eternal value. Paul teaches that a believer's works will be judged by fire at the Judgment Seat of Christ. He adds, "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss, but he himself should be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:15). Such a believer ends up with no works of eternal value.

The objection to this observation is that James teaches faith without works is dead, which is taken to mean that genuine faith *always* produces works and, therefore, if someone has no works, they were *never saved*. That is not what James is teaching. In the first place, he is talking about the Judgment Seat of Christ (Jas. 2:12-13; see "profit" in Jas. 2:14 and 2:16). Faith alone cannot "save" the believer from the loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Jas. 2:14; in the book of James the word "saved" is never used of eternal salvation; for example, see "the prayer of faith shall save the sick" in Jas. 5:15). James clearly teaches that justification is by faith (Jas. 2:23), but he also teaches there is a justification by works (Jas. 2:21). Works make faith perfect (Jas. 2:22) and justifies (vindicates) the believer before others (see "you see" in Jas. 2:24). Justification by faith *without works* is before God (Rom. 4:5; note Paul says "to him who *does not work* but believes on Him) and justification by works is before men (James 2:24). So the faith of which James speaks is real faith, but it is idle, inactive ("dead"), not producing loving works that will be profitable at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The very idea of *dead* faith indicates the faith was once alive and it died. A dead battery is still a battery.

4. Believers *should* endure. In studying the subject of endurance in the New Testament, it should be noted that the Greek word for "endurance" is sometimes translated "patience" or "perseverance." In the Greek text, all of the following verses contain the word endure or endurance, even though these words are translated patience or perseverance. At any rate, believers are *exhorted* to endure (Rom. 12:12; 1 Tim. 6:11; Titus 2:2; Heb. 10:36, 12:1; 2 Pet. 1:6; Rev. 3:10), indicating that endurance is not automatic. Believers must cooperate with the Lord; they must choose to endure. In fact, when speaking about endurance, the New Testament sometimes uses the word "if" (2 Tim. 2:12; 1 Pet. 2:20; Heb. 12:7). For believers to endure, they must have faith (Jas. 1:3). It is their faith in the midst of tribulation that produces endurance (Rom. 5:3) and endurance produces character (Rom. 5:4), spiritual maturity (Jas. 1:4).

Lamentably, some believers do not endure to the end of their lives. There is a sin unto death, which believers commit, meaning they prematurely die and they die in sin. The sin unto death indicates that not all believers endure in sanctification to the end (see 1 Jn. 5:16; 1 Cor. 11:30; Jas. l:15; 5:19-20; Acts 5:1-11). In 1 Corinthians 5, there is a believer living in sexual immorality who refuses to repent. Paul instructs the Corinthians in his name to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh "that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5). In other words, in this passage, Paul assumes this believer lived in sin, refused to repent, died in a sin, and went to heaven. Some saints don't persevere.

The objection to this conclusion is that believers *must* endure to the end to be saved. Does not the New Testament say that those who endure to the end are saved (Mt. 10:22, 24:12; Mk. 13:13)? In Matthew 24, the apostles asked about the *end of the age* (Mt. 24:3). In answering their question, Jesus mentions "the end" three times (Mt. 24:6, 13, 14). In each case, the end is not the end of one's life but the end of the Tribulation. Endurance is enduring the persecution of the Tribulation (Mt. 24:9-12). The Greek word translated "saved" means "save, deliver." In this passage, "saved" is not salvation from sin, but deliverance from physical death. Jesus says, "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Mt. 24:22). No flesh being saved means no one escapes physical death. This passage has nothing to do with believers being eternally saved only if they endure to the end of their lives. Mark 13:13 is Mark's account of the same event that Matthew records in Matthew 24. Matthew 10:22 is also referring to the Tribulation. It begins with a commission to the disciples to go just to Israel (Mt. 10:5-6), but it goes beyond that, as is evident by the fact that Jesus begins speaking about them being before Gentiles (Mt. 10:18). Therefore, Matthew 10:22 is not referring to the immediate commission of the Apostles, but to the time just before the Second Coming (Mt. 10:23).

5. Believers *should* not sin. As Paul says, "Awake to righteousness and do not sin" (1 Cor. 15:34). To prevent sinning, believers must cooperate with the Lord; they must walk in the Spirit so as not to fulfill the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16).

Sad to say, believers sin. That is not a debatable issue (Jas. 3:2; 1 Jn. 1:8, 10; both James and John use "we;" they included themselves). Paul readily admitted, "The good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice" (Rom. 7:19). Any position that says believers cannot fall into sin renders the imperatives of the New Testament meaningless. For example, Paul says, "Do not be conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2). If believers can't be conformed to the world, why did Paul warn against it?

6. Believers *should* certainly not commit so-called "serious sins," such as idolatry, adultery, and murder. Paul says, "Fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting" (Eph. 5:3-4). Believers must cooperate with the Lord; they must "flee from idolatry" (1 Cor. 10:14; 1 Jn. 5:21), "flee sexual immorality" (1 Cor. 6:17), etc.

Deplorably, Noah got drunk (Gen. 9:20-21). Abraham lied (Gen. 12:11-20). Lot committed incest (Gen. 19:36). David committed adultery (2 Sam. 11:2-5) and murder (2 Sam. 11:14-17). Peter denied the Lord—three times! (Mt. 26:69-75). Peter warned believers not to be accused of murder (1 Pet. 4:15). One commentator says the imperatives of Romans 6 and Romans 7:14-25 "forbid us to conclude that he [Paul] thought that it [the new nature] had actually made it impossible for genuine believers to continue to sin seriously" (Cranfield on Romans, p. 299).

In his comments on Proverbs 28:26 ("He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered"), Bridges quotes Bishop Wilson: "There is no sin, which a man ought not to fear, or to think himself capable of committing since we have in our corrupt will the seeds of every sin." Bridges adds, "None of us can safely presume that his heart may not hurry him into abominations, which he cannot now contemplate without horror. If Eve, in a state of innocence, could believe a serpent before her maker; if 'the saint of the Lord' could worship the golden calf; if a 'the man after God s own heart' could

wallow in adultery, murder, and deceit; if the wisest of men, and the warm-hearted disciple just referred to, could sink so low—what may not we do?" [Charles Bridges (1794-1869) was an evangelical pastor in the Church of England; Charles Haddon Spurgeon said Bridges' commentary was on Proverbs was "the best work on the Proverbs"].

7. Believers *should* not fall away from the faith. That is the whole point of enduring in the faith (Jas. 1:2-4, where the Greek word "endure" is translated "patience"). Believers must cooperate with the Lord; they must walk by faith (Gal. 2:20). The writer to the Hebrews warns, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily while it is called 'today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:12-13; note he calls them brethren and tells them to exhort one another; he is talking to believers).

Tragically, believers may fall away. In the parable of the Sower, Jesus taught that some receive the Word with joy, but they have no root. He then explains that they "believe for a while and in the time of temptation fall away" (Lk. 8:13). Some commentators argue that these were not genuine believers because they only believed for a while, but just prior to this verse, Jesus speaks of believing as being saved (Lk. 8:12) and the kind of seed which Jesus describes in verse 13 germinated; it produced life (Lk. 8:6). Furthermore, the Greek word translated "fall away" in Luke 8:13 is translated "departing" in Hebrews 3:12, where the writer to the Hebrews says, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." This verse is clearly talking to genuine believers (see "brethren … any of you."

Although often denied, the tragic truth is that some believers do not persevere in the faith; they fall away from it. They only believe for a while, and then they fall away (Lk. 8:13; the moment they believe, they are born again; even though a son may deny the family, he is still a son). They resist God's correction to the point of physical death (1 Cor. 11:30-32). They stray from the faith (1 Tim. 1:5-6; 6:9-10, 6:20-21). They shipwreck their faith (1 Tim. 1:18-20). They depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1-3). They deny the faith (1 Tim. 5:8; the fact that they are worse than an unbeliever indicates they are believers). They cast off their first faith (1 Tim. 5:12-15). They deny the Lord (2 Tim. 2:12). They end up faithless (2 Tim. 2:13; the fact that Paul says "we" are faithless indicates Paul is talking about believers; see also 2 Peter 1:8).

In fact, the Scripture contemplates the possibility of believers being deceived concerning the most fundamental doctrines of the faith. The apostle John was concerned that false teachers who denied that Jesus is the Christ were trying to deceive believers, which certainly seems to imply that such a deception was possible (1 Jn. 2:21-27). Paul told the Corinthians, "I fear, lest somehow as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). In the very next verse, Paul gives the specific things about which they could be deceived. He says, "For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it!" (2 Cor. 11:4). Paul also marveled that the Galatians, whom he called brethren (Gal. 3:15), were "turning away so soon from Him who called you into the grace of Christ to another gospel" (Gal. 1:6).

The New Testament indicates that some believers do not begin well, some live carnal lives all their lives, and some do not end well. That is tragic, but it is true. Whenever any of that happens, we should be grieved and do everything we can to help those believers

grow. I begin with the gospel to make sure that the individual is saved. Once satisfied the individual understands the gospel and they give a clear testimony of having trusted Christ, I urge that person by the mercies of God to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:1-2).

To repeat the point that was made at the beginning of this subsection, "Believers *should* grow in grace, bear fruit, produce good works, endure to the end of their lives, and have victory over sin, but they may not." The reason believers should cooperate with the Lord to develop their spiritual lives to the end of their lives is that if they do, they will be blessed in this life and rewarded in the next (1 Tim. 4:8). They will bear fruit (Lk. 8:15), be blessed (Jas. 5:11), grow to spiritual maturity (Rom. 5:4; Eph. 4:15; Jas. 1:4), and will be rewarded (1 Cor. 3:11-14; 2 Tim. 2:12; Jas. 1:12; also see the "overcomer" in Rev. 2-3). On the other hand, if they do not cooperate with the Lord, they will be disciplined in this life (Heb. 12:5-7; 1 Cor. 11:29-30) and will lose rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:12-15). No wonder Paul prayed for believers to have endurance (Col. 1:11; 2 Thess. 3:5)!

The Historical Development

As has been pointed out, only three Christian systems of salvation have been formulated, formally adopted, and followed by large, organized bodies of the Christian church. Obviously, just because a system has been formulated, formally adopted, and followed by a large, organized group does not mean that it has all or even part of the truth of the New Testament. It just means that it was formulated, formally adopted, and followed by a large organization.

Unfortunately, as James B. Torrance has said, "In all ages, issues have emerged which have tended to obscure the meaning of grace" (Torrance, cited by Bell, p. 5). The large organized bodies of the Christian church have obscured the True Grace system of salvation. Nevertheless, throughout church history, individuals, groups, and churches have taught the critical elements of the True Grace system. To say the same thing another way, the True Grace system of salvation has never been formulated, formally adopted, and followed by large, organized bodies of the Christian church, *but individuals, groups, and churches have taught critical aspects of it.*

The two major features of the True Grace system are a) salvation by faith alone in Christ alone (which includes assurance of salvation from the moment of faith) and b) believers should grow, but they may not. A consistent True Grace position holds to both of these two aspects of salvation. In church history, however, many have been inconsistent; they have held to the first of these features without holding to the second because they believed that if there is no perseverance, there is no salvation, or they believed that if there is no perseverance, there is loss of salvation, but they believe in salvation by grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They have at least taught part of the grace system, the most important part.

Faith Alone, Plus Nothing When it comes to studying faith in church history, it must be remembered that Christians have not agreed on the definition of faith. For example, Augustine (354-430) said, "Faith is nothing else than to think with assent" (Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, chapter 5, cited by Lewellen, p. 56). Who today would agree with that definition? Lewellen points out that "the nature of saving faith has been debated at every point of church history" (Lewellen, p. 56).

The question is, "Who in church history has taught the biblical view of faith alone in Christ alone, including assurance being bound up in faith?"

John Calvin (1509-1564) wrote, "For, as regards justification, faith is something merely passive, bringing nothing of ours to the recovering of God's favor but receiving from Christ what we lack" (Calvin, *Institutes*, III xni 5). He also wrote, "We compare faith to a kind of vessel; for unless we come empty and with the mouth of our soul open to seek Christ's grace, we are not capable of receiving Christ" (Calvin, *Institutes*, III xi 7). Commenting on these statements, Lewellen says, "By 'passive,' Calvin apparently did not mean the one coming to Christ does absolutely nothing. Obviously, the sinner must trust or rely on Christ for salvation. By 'passivity' Calvin meant that the sinner receives salvation through simple trust in Christ, that he gives nothing to possess this salvation" (Lewellen, p. 57). Lewellen adds, "To Calvin, faith is not obedience or commitment. Obedience, in Calvin's view, flows from faith and is part of the nature of the Christian life (Lewellen cites Calvin's *Institutes*, III ii 1-20). Faith itself is *reliance* on the divine promises of salvation in Christ and nothing more" (Lewellen, p. 57, italics his).

Torrance speaks of the "unconditional freeness of grace taught by Calvin and the first Reformers" (Torrance, cited by Bell, p. 5). Lewellen says that although Calvin and the Lutheran theologians had disagreements, there seems to be "complete agreement" on the nature of saving faith. He says, "Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560), the contemporary of Luther and author of *The Augsburg Confession*, defined faith purely as 'receptivity.' This idea of faith as receiving is so much a part of confessional Lutheran theology today as to be beyond controversy. Francis Pieper, the author of the modern standard theology of confessional Lutheranism, wrote, 'Saving faith is essentially the *reliance* of the heart on the promises of God set forth in the gospel'" (Lewellen, pp. 57-58, italics his).

By the way, Lewellen explains, "In the generations following the Reformation, some theologians subtly changed the Reformers' definition of faith from a passive receptivity to an active response on the part of the sinner, centered in the will and containing both commitment and obedience. This change is most evident in the writings of the English Calvinists and is embodied in the Westminster Standards. This explains in part why lordship salvation teachers rely most heavily on Westminster theology and the writings of the English Calvinists to validate their position" (Lewellen, p. 58). In his book, *Calvinism and Scottish Theology*, Bell says that is what happened in Scotland. He says, "The Federalists frequently described faith in terms of our trusting in, resting on, laying hold of Christ" (Bell, p. 11). Then over the years, they drifted away from that position.

John Knox (ca. 1514- 1572), the famous Scottish Reformer, preached that people should direct their faith to Christ crucified and the promises of God contained in the Scripture (Bell, p. 43), yet he also preached that people can definitely determine whether or not they have saving faith by examining themselves for the presence of the fruit of the Spirit (Bell, p. 44). John Craig (ca. 1512- 1600), a colleague of John Knox, taught that faith is the persuasion that Christ is *my* Savior and assurance is the essence of one's faith (Bell, p. 49); he also taught that faith produces good works like fire produces heat (Bell, p. 52). Robert Rollock (1555-1599), the first Principal of Edinburgh University, a professor of theology, and author of commentaries highly praised by Beza called faith a special confidence, trust, and certainty of God's truth (Bell, p. 55). He criticized his adversaries for placing the ground of assurance in their own strength, works, or merit (Bell, p. 56), yet he also said that if faith doesn't produce good works, it is evidence of not having true faith

(Bell, p. 57). John Welch (1570-1622), who married the youngest daughter of John Knox, said that faith was believing that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God and that He died for you (Bell, pp. 58-59). He taught that assurance was the essence of faith, but at the same time, he frequently listed signs by which people may determine if they have saving faith (Bell, pp. 60- 61).

Lewellen concludes, "Many who espouse a free grace view, and who regard faith as simple trust by which the believer relies solely on the divine promises of forgiveness in Christ, find themselves comfortably aligned with both Calvin and Luther and *many* of their successors" (Lewellen, p. 59, italics added). The exception is English Puritanism, which has greatly influenced some strands of modern evangelicalism. Note: *many* in church history have taught that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone and that assurance is bound up in faith. They may not have been consistent True Grace adherers, but they at least got the first half, the most important half, right.

Assurance Calvin taught that assurance was the essence of faith. Bell states, "Without question, Calvin teaches that assurance of one's salvation is of the very essence of faith. Assurance is not an optional extra for the believer" (Bell, p. 22). Lane says, "For Calvin, it was not possible to partake of salvation without being sure of it. Assurance is not a second stage in the Christian life, subsequent to and distinct from faith. In the following century, some of his followers did separate them in this way and this, together with a departure from Calvin's ground of assurance, led to a widespread loss of assurance" (Lane, cited, by Lewellen, p. 61).

Calvin "warned against all attempts to find assurance by an observation of one's works. He says that from one's works, 'conscience feels more fear and consternation than assurance.' As Lane says of Calvin's view, 'Any attempt to base assurance on such works is doomed to failure since the tender conscience will soon see the inadequacy of the foundation. If we maintain assurance on such a basis, it shows that we do not recognize our own imperfection and opens the door to self-trust.' To Calvin, the ground of assurance does not lie within oneself. Faith includes assurance solely because the object of saving faith is the finished work of Christ as it is offered in the gospel. Faith looks to Christ alone and confidently rests on His saving promise" (Lane, cited by Lewellen, p. 62). In other words, the ground of assurance is faith, not fruit.

"Both Calvin and Luther taught that assurance of salvation is of the very essence of faith" (Lewellen, p. 61). Lewellen says, "Martin Luther wrote that saving faith is 'the sort of faith that does not look at its own works nor at its own strength and worthiness, noting what sort of quality or new created or infused virtue it may be ... but faith goes out of itself, clings to Christ, and embraces Him as its own possession; and faith is certain that it is loved by God for His sake.' And where does this certainty come from? According to Luther, it comes from relying on the promise of God's mercy in the gospel and not from any sense of internal change. 'For certainty does not come to me from any kind of reflection on myself and on my state. On the contrary, it comes solely through hearing the Word, solely because and in so far as I cling to the Word of God and its promise.' Faith is only acceptance of the Word, effective for salvation, and is for Luther, the decisive source of certainty" (Lewellen, p. 61).

"Pfurtner writes, 'Luther placed the certainty of salvation at the very heart of his Reformation message, and made western Christianity begin again to be aware of it. . . . Faith, to Luther, is pure reception and seizure of the message of salvation with the act of

which the sinner, falling into despair, yields to God and his forgiving grace.' As with the nature of saving faith, contemporary confessional Lutheranism has not swayed far from its source on this issue" (Lewellen, p. 61).

John McLeod Campbell (1800-1872) was a pastor in the Church of Scotland. The first signs of trouble came in 1827 when some took offense to his sermon on assurance. In 1831, charges were brought against him. The General Assembly found that what he taught about "the *doctrine of universal atonement* and pardon through the death of Christ, as also the doctrine of *assurance is of the essence of faith* and necessary for salvation are contrary to the Holy Scriptures and to the Confession of Faith approved by the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland" (Bell, p. 181, italics his). He was found guilty of heresy and was removed from his ministry. The Church of Scotland condemned Campbell for believing in Unlimited Atonement and that people could be sure of their salvation the moment they believe!

Campbell then worked for two years as an evangelist in the Scottish Highlands. In 1833, he returned to Glasgow, where his close friends built a large chapel specifically for him. He ministered there for 26 years. In 1856, he published *The Nature of the Atonement*, a book that profoundly influenced Scottish theology. In 1862, he published *Thoughts on Revelation*, and a few years later (1869), he published a revised version of his 1851 book: *Christ the Bread of Life*. In 1868, he received a D.D. degree from Glasgow University. Latourette said that Campbell's book on the atonement was "regarded by some friendly critics as the greatest work in theology in English in the last six decades of the century" (Latourette, p. 1196). Because of his work on the atonement, James B. Torrance placed Campbell alongside Athanasius and Anselm (James B. Torrance, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, #26, 1973, p. 295).

Campbell preached that "salvation was guaranteed for all believers" (see John McLeod Campbell at www.britannica.com, accessed April 19, 2013). In one of his sermons, Campbell said, "If Christ died for you, then all your sins are atoned for—taken away; and the barrier which they interposed between you and God the longer exist but to your own imagination—God is not imputing sin to you—you are pardoned—you have a prevailing advocate with God—you have access by the way thus open up into the holiest;—this is the situation in which you now are. To know the love of God is to know that *you* are at liberty to approach God as *sinless*; that is your sin, as a cause of for distrust, is taken away; and that if you had never forfeited it, *you* have given you in Christ right to enjoy God's love as in that of the Father" (Campbell, cited by James C. Goodloe IV, John McLeod Campbell: "The Extent and Nature of the Atonement," www.foundationrt.org/writings/Campbell.pdf, accessed April 19, 2013, italics his).

Bell explains that for Campbell, the issue was God's character, the character of a loving Father revealed in the Son (Bell, p. 182). Whereas the Reformed theology of his day produced a God whose essential attribute is justice, Campbell taught that the most important statement to be made of God is that He is love (Bell, p 183). One of Campbell's arguments for Unlimited Atonement is that if God commands us to love all humanity, even our enemies, we must expect nothing less of Him. He thinks it is not possible that one who commands universal love from us would Himself limit His love (Bell, p. 186). In commenting on Campbell, Bell says, "Unless Christ died for all, there is no warrant for a universal offer of Christ and the gospel, and, thus, no basis for assurance of salvation" (Bell, p. 187).

Campbell's frequently spoke of faith in terms of trust (Bell, p. 188) and assurance as the essence of faith (Bell, p. 190). According to Campbell, if one has never experienced the assurance of salvation, that is not because they have believed incorrectly but because they have not believed what they are called to believe. It is failing to understand "the free grace of God" and to see what God has given us in Christ (Bell, p. 190). Yet he allows that, at times, a believer may experience doubt. Assurance of salvation is regained by fixing the eyes of our faith once again on Jesus Christ. Campbell never exhorts a Christian who experiences doubt to try his faith by self-examination; he explicitly disapproves of such a practice (Bell, pp. 190-191). Campbell insists that 2 Peter 1:5-11 was addressed to believers who already possessed knowledge of their calling and election. That passage "is not calling believers to do something *in order to ascertain* their calling and election, but it is an admonition given to them in order to give stability and firmness to things already past" (Bell, p. 191, italics his). We gain assurance of salvation not by reflecting upon our act of faith, seeking to determine whether or not we have believed properly, nor by reflecting upon the fruit of our faith, seeking evidence of having believed savingly, but by contemplating the finished work of Christ in our behalf (Bell, pp. 191-192). Such an approach is not only thoroughly objective but also intensely personal (Bell, p. 192).

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889) was a Scottish pastor, author, and hymn writer. He pastored one church from 1837 to 1866 and another from 1866 to 1887. He taught "the essentially passive and assuring nature of faith in Christ's atoning work" (Lewellen, p. 63)

Saying that assurance of salvation is possible when people believe assumes Unlimited Atonement. If Christ died for the sins of the world, people can be sure He died *for them*, but if Christ did not die for the sins of the world, people cannot be certain Christ died for them. Who in church history taught Unlimited Atonement? Although denied by most Calvinists today and debated by other Calvinists, John Calvin himself taught Unlimited Atonement. In his commentary on Romans 5:18, Calvin wrote, "He (Christ) makes this favor common to all, because it is propounded to all, and not because it is in reality extended to all; for though Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world, and is offered through God's benignity indiscriminately to all, yet all do not receive him" (for more quotes from Calvin, see Bell, p. 14; for the answer to those who say Calvin taught Limited Atonement, see Bell, pp. 15-17).

Calvin links assurance of salvation to Unlimited Atonement. Bell explains, "It is clear that this doctrine of universal atonement is important for Calvin's teaching on faith and assurance. Once we know that Christ's atonement 'was done for the redemption of the whole world' and 'pertains to every of us severally,' then we should claim on our own behalf that 'the Son of God hath loved me so dearly that he hath given himself to death for me.' Thus, according to Calvin, Christ's universal atonement is 'a warrant for our salvation, so as we ought to think ourselves thoroughly assured of it'" (Bell, p. 17; Bell is quoting one of Calvin's sermons on Galatians).

In his commentary on John 3:17, Calvin said, "There is now no reason why any man should be in a state of hesitation, or of distressing anxiety, as to the manner in which he may escape death when we believe that it was the purpose of God that Christ should deliver us from it. The word world is again repeated, that no man may think himself wholly excluded if he only keeps the road of faith." In other words, those who have faith can be assured that they are not excluded because Christ died for the sins of the world.

Eternal Security The idea that believers in Jesus Christ cannot lose their salvation, no matter what, is at least as old as the time of the Protestant Reformation. The Anabaptists believed in Eternal Security, as is proven by the Augsburg Confession (1530), which says, "We condemn the Anabaptists, who say that those who have been once justified can no more lose the Holy Spirit" (*Augsburg Confession*, Article XII).

Campbell preached that "salvation was guaranteed for all believers" (see John McLeod Campbell at www.britannica.com, accessed April 19, 2013).

The Plymouth Brethren (formed in Dublin in 1827-28) teach Eternal Security. While there are doctrinal differences among the Plymouth Brethren, as a general rule, Plymouth Brethren churches are True Grace oriented. Members of the movement include Sir Robert Anderson (author), F. F. Bruce (editor of the New International Commentary of the New Testament series), John Nelson Darby (church planter, translator, and hymn writer), Jim Elliot (martyred missionary in Ecuador), Harry Ironside (commentator, pastor of the Moody Memorial Church), William Kelly (commentator), William MacDonald (author of *Believer's Bible Commentary*, which John MacArthur Jr. says is the best one-volume commentary on the Bible), C. H. Mackintosh (author of *Notes on the Pentateuch* and *Miscellaneous Writings*), George Mueller (ran a chain of orphanages), Samuel Tregelles (noted Greek scholar), and W. E. Vine (author of *Vine's Expository Dictionary* and numerous commentaries). According to Steele, a critic of the Plymouth Brethren, D. L. Moody, learned his method of Bible study from them and they claimed him as a product of their system (Steele, p. 54).

Steele says, "Both Calvinism and Arminianism have checks which deter believers from sin. The Arminian is told that the holiest saints on earth may fall from grace and drop into hell. The Calvinist is restrained from abusing the doctrine of unconditional election by the consideration that no man may, beyond a doubt, know that his own name is in the secret register of God's chosen ones. This ignorance inspires a helpful solicitude promotive of watchfulness and persevering fidelity in the Calvinist, just as the possibility of total and final apostasy tends to conserve the purity of the Arminian. The Plymouth Brethren drop both of these safeguards by uniting, with eternal incorporation into Christ, a present and absolute assurance of that fact" (Steele, pp. 85-86). In short, Plymouth Brethren not only believe in assurance but also in absolute assurance and eternal security, which Steele, the Methodist Arminian, rejects.

Emmaus Bible College's (a Plymouth Brethren College; classes began in 1941) doctrinal statement states, "Redemption is wholly by the blood of Christ, and salvation is by grace, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" and "Every true child of God possesses eternal life and being justified, sanctified and sealed with the Holy Spirit, is safe and secure for all eternity." In their doctrinal statement, a Plymouth Brethren assembly in Atlanta (Atlanta Christian Brethren Assembly) says, "We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice and that all who believe on Him are freely justified before God and stand before Him accepted on the merits of Jesus Christ's shed blood. Salvation is by grace alone." In explaining the history and doctrine of the Plymouth Brethren, they say, "a Christian can, through sin, lose his fellowship, joy, power, testimony, and reward, thus incurring the Father's chastisement. Relationship is eternal, being established by new birth; fellowship, however, is dependent upon obedience."

Dallas Seminary's (founded 1924) doctrinal statement says, "Article X—Eternal Security. We believe that, because of the eternal purpose of God toward the objects of His love, because of His freedom to exercise grace toward the meritless on the ground of the propitiatory blood of Christ, because of the very nature of the divine gift of eternal life, because of the present and unending intercession and advocacy of Christ in heaven, because of the immutability of the unchangeable covenants of God, because of the regenerating, abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all who are saved, we and all true believers everywhere, once saved shall be kept saved forever. We believe, however, that God is a holy and righteous Father and that, since He cannot overlook the sin of His children, He will, when they persistently sin, chasten them and correct them in infinite love; but having undertaken to save them and keep them forever, apart from all human merit, He, who cannot fail, will in the end present every one of them faultless before the presence of His glory and conformed to the image of His Son (John 5:24; 10:28; 13:1; 14:16–17; 17:11; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 6:19; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1–2; 5:13; Jude 24)."

Awana's (a children's ministry that began in 1941; officially founded in 1950) doctrinal statement says, "We believe that salvation is a gift of God and is received by man through personal faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for sin. We believe that man is justified by grace through faith apart from works and that all true believers, once saved, are kept secure in Christ forever. (Acts 13:38-39; Romans 4:5; 6:23; 8:1, 38-39; John 10:27-29; Ephesians 2:8-9)."

New Tribes (a mission organization founded in 1942) believes "That salvation is a free and everlasting gift of God, entirely apart from works, received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that the Holy Spirit regenerates with divine life and personally indwells the believer upon his faith in Christ for salvation," and that "a soul once saved can never be lost."

Growth in Grace This is where some in the Free Grace camp are part company with other Free Gracers. Many in church history have believed in the freeness of grace, but they also taught that believers are under the moral Law of Moses. In their view, the "third use of the Law," the Ten Commandments, is a guide for believers (Calvin; Luther; etc.). A consistent grace position insists that salvation is by grace through faith alone and that spiritual growth to spiritual maturity is by grace through faith. Believers are not under the Mosaic Law; they are under the Law of Christ, the Law of Love, which fulfills the moral law. This is a critical issue. Do believers grow by trying to obey the Law, or do they grow by depending on the grace of God to love, which fulfills the Law? In other words, should they focus on the Law or depend upon the Spirit of God to develop Christ-like spiritual maturity?

The idea that believers are not under the Mosaic Law is not new. As early as 130 AD, the Epistle of Barnabas taught that Christians are not bound to observe the Mosaic Law because the Mosaic Covenant ended with the death of Christ (The Epistle of Barnabas, chapter 2).

Wells says millions in church history have taught that believers are not under the Mosaic Law (http://solochrisom/theology/nto.cct/wells-reisingeranantinomian.htm, accessed 4/19/2013). He uses John Owen (1616-1683), a Puritan, as an illustration. Some of the Puritans followed Calvin in saying that the Mosaic Covenant was the Covenant of Grace. The problem with that is the sharp contrast the New Testament draws between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Owen and others concluded that the Mosaic Law,

including the moral and ceremonial laws, was done away (believers are not under the Mosaic Law). That does not mean that believers are lawless; they are under the law of Christ. As Wells explains, the Mosaic Law and the Law of Christ are distinct but contain common elements. His illustration is that when a church adopts a new constitution, the old constitution is no longer in force, but the new constitution may contain some of the same articles as the old constitution. Likewise, the Law of Christ contains some of the same laws as the Mosaic Law.

In his commentary on Hebrews, Owen argued that all of the Mosaic Law (moral and ceremonial) was disannulled (canceled). He said, "I have proved before that 'the commandment' in this verse (Heb. 8:18) is of equal extent and signification with 'the law' in the next (Heb. 7:19). And 'the law' there doth evidently intend the whole law, in both the parts of it, moral and ceremonial, as it was given by Moses unto the church of Israel. And this whole law is here charged by our apostle with 'weakness and unprofitableness;' both which make a law fit to be disannulled" (from Owen's Commentary on Heb. 7:18).

Dispensationalism, with its distinction between law and grace, teaches that believers are not under the Law of Moses but the Law of Christ. Dispensationalists, such as The Plymouth Brethren, The Scofield Reference Bible, Dallas Theological Seminary, and others, have enormously impacted evangelicalism.

Owen, a Dispensationalist, and others have been accused of antinomianism. The word "antinomian" comes from two Greek words: *anti*, meaning "against" and *nomos*, meaning "law." Thus, the word's root meaning is "against the law." It is often defined as the belief that Christians do not have to obey *any* moral law (Latourette, p. 114). Wow! Does that mean some Christians believe they do not have to obey *any moral law*? Not really. As a church historian, Latourette says, it is a *theoretical doctrine*; most antinomians lead moral lives (Latourette, p. 215).

Bayes describes the debate: "The point of the issue may be summarized as follows: does the moral element in the law of the Old Testament continue to have binding force and directing power in the life of the believer, such that it exercises a key role in sanctification when employed by the Holy Spirit?" He uses the expression "doctrinal antinomianism" to designate the view of those who either contend that a Christian's sanctification is only accomplished by the direct work of the Holy Spirit, "or, if He employs any means at all, [it] is the Gospel of justification by grace through faith in Christ [that is] the sole and sufficient instrument of sanctification" (Bayes, p. 4).

The point is that those who teach that believers are not under the Mosaic Law are accused of antinomianism, but that does not mean that they teach that believers have a license to sin. It is more accurate to say they believe in "doctrinal antinomianism," which is simply the idea that believers are not under the Mosaic Law; they are under the law of Christ, which, by the way, repeats nine of the Ten Commandments (for a more detailed discussion of antinomianism, see G. Michael Cocoris, "Antinomianism," available at www.insightsfromtheword.com, under Theological Studies)

What about the idea that believers may not grow and may even fall from the faith? This has been a persistent problem throughout church history. In the early centuries, the church grappled with the fact that some denied the faith because of persecution. More recently, the Plymouth Brethren make a distinction between standing and state. Believers' standing before God is based on faith and is not affected by their state.

In his booklet, "*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, C. I Scofield, editor of the Scofield Reference Bible (which has had an enormous impact on evangelicalism), says standing "is the result of the work of Christ and is perfect and entire from the very moment that Christ is received by faith. Nothing in the afterlife of the believer adds in the smallest degree to his title of God's favor, nor his perfect security. Faith alone conferred standing in God's sight, before Him the weakest, most ignorant, most infirm, and fallible man on earth, if he be but a true believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, has precisely the same title as the most illustrious saint" (Scofield, p. 51). Scofield adds, "The student cannot fail to notice, also, that the Divine order, under grace, is first to GIVE the highest possible *standing*, and then to exhort the believer to maintain a state in accordance therewith. The beggar is lifted up from the dunghill and set among the princes (1 Sam. 2:8), and then exhorted to be princely (Scofield, p. 54, all caps "give" and italics his). Scofield also says, "*Positionally* he (the believer) is 'perfected forever' (Heb. 10:14), but looking within, at his *state*, 'he must say, not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.' Phil. 3:12" (Scofield, p. 56, italics his).

Scofield illustrates, "The present King of Spain is a little child—presumably as willful and is ignorant as other little children. Sometimes he may be very obedient and teachable and affectionate, and then he is happy and approved. At other times, he may be unruly, self-willed and disobedient, and then he is unhappy and perhaps is chastised—but he is just as much King on one day as on the other. It may be hoped that, as time goes on, he will learn to bring himself into willing and affectionate subjection to every right way, and then he will be more *kingly*, but not anymore really king. *He was born the King*" (Scofield, p. 56, italics his).

Many, perhaps most, Dispensationalists also distinguish between standing and state. Many Baptists who believe in Eternal Security also say believers can "backslide," that is, fall away.

Schreiner writes, "According to Kendall, the person who has become a Christian '*will go to heaven when he dies no matter what work (or lack of work) may accompany such faith'* (italics his). Kendall asks, 'What if a person who is saved falls into sin, stays in sin, and is found in that very condition when he dies? Will he still go to heaven?' The answer is yes. He concludes, 'I, therefore, state categorically that the person who is saved—who confesses that Jesus is Lord and believes in his heart that God raised Him from the dead—*will go to heaven when he dies no matter what work (or lack of work) may accompany such faith*'" (Schreiner, p. 35, italics his; R. T. Kendall has a Ph.D. from Oxford University and was pastor of the Westminster Chapel in London for 25 years).

Schreiner goes on to say, "Charles Stanley articulates a similar view, for he writes, 'The Bible clearly teaches that God's love for His people is of such magnitude that even those who walk away from the faith have not the slightest chance of slipping from His hand.' He adds, 'Even if a believer for all practical purposes becomes an unbeliever, his salvation is not in jeopardy.' Furthermore, he argues that 'believers who lose or abandon their faith will retain their salvation, for God remains faithful'" (Schreiner, p. 35).

Of course, in the final analysis, history is not the guide. As Calvin said, the church fathers were "ignorant of many things, often disagreed among themselves, and sometimes even contradicted themselves" (Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, preface, section 4).

An Evaluation

Like the other systems of salvation, the True Grace position is a system. Unfortunately, only part of the system is often presented, namely, that forgiveness is absolutely free to those who trust Jesus Christ for the gift of eternal life. When only part of the picture is presented, the True Grace system comes off sounding as if sin doesn't matter. No less than the apostle Paul faced this problem. In Romans, he wrote, "And why not say, 'let us do evil that good may come'?—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say" (Rom. 3:8). Later, he asked, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? (Rom. 6:1). He had to ask and answer those questions because his justification by grace through faith seemed to imply that a person could trust in Christ and continue in sin.

The consistent, complete True Grace system insists that while justification is absolutely free when people trust Christ, if they do not grow, they will be disciplined by the Lord in this life (2 Tim. 4:7-8) and lose rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:12-15). As assurance is theologically linked to unlimited atonement, perseverance is linked to temporal discipline and eternal rewards in the True Grace system.

Summary: The essence of the True Grace system of salvation is that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone, plus nothing; that assurance is the essence of faith; that those who believe are eternally secure, even though they may not endure to the end of their lives; that believers who persevere are blessed in this life and rewarded in the next, and that those who don't persevere are disciplined in this life and lose rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. For a more thorough discussion of all the pertinent passages in the New Testament concerning True Grace and an answer to Lordship Salvation, see G. Michael Cocoris, *The Salvation Controversy* (This book is available for purchase at Amazon.com).

CONCLUSION

Since the close of the New Testament, three Christian systems of salvation have been formulated, formally adopted, and followed by large, organized bodies of the Christian church. Sacramentalism evolved over many centuries and has clearly departed from the New Testament teaching concerning salvation. Arminianism was a reaction to the Calvinism of Beza, and Calvinism (not Calvin) was a reaction to Arminianism.

One of the major differences between Calvinism and Arminianism is what they do with the promises and the warnings of the New Testament. On the one hand, the New Testament promises eternal life to those who believe (Jn. 3:16). On the other hand, there are passages that warn believers of the dire consequences of not growing and or falling into sin (Jn. 15; Heb. 6; Heb. 10; etc.). The Calvinists tenaciously cling to the promises and explain away the warnings by saying that the warning passages of the New Testament are not speaking about genuine believers. The Arminians correctly understand that the warning passages are directed to believers, and they conclude that it is possible for believers to lose their salvation. Thus, they end up clinging to the warnings and, in effect, nullifying the promises. The True Grace system holds to both the promises and the warnings. The promises are taken literally: believers in Jesus Christ have eternal life and shall never perish. The warnings are also taken literally and seriously. Believers who continue in sin experience the discipline of God in this life and loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ, but although they do not grow, they are believers who will spend eternity in heaven.

Another way to compare the three Protestant positions is to note what each says about producing fruit and good works and enduring to the end.

The theology	**If you are saved**	**If you do not produce fruit**
Calvinism	You **will** produce fruit, etc.	You were **never saved**
Arminianism	You **must** produce fruit, etc.	You **lose your salvation**
True Grace	You **should** produce fruit, etc.	You are **disciplined now and lose rewards later**

The four systems of salvation are not monolithic. Although Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy are both Sacramental, they have differences. Not all Calvinists are alike (for example, some, but not all, believe in double predestination); neither are all Arminians alike. There are also differences among advocates of True Grace (some emphasize the necessity of bearing fruit more than others). Nevertheless, all proponents of a particular position are in agreement with the basic concepts of their position as outlined in this presentation.

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