

Feature Article: DD802-1

## THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY/HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY DEBATE: Part One

by James R. White and George Bryson

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### Soli Deo Gloria

by James R. White

*Soli Deo Gloria*—"to God alone be the glory." This was one of the "solas" of the Reformation. Like *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide*, this credo of the Reformation has fallen on hard times. Today many who benefit from the work of the Reformers stand firmly against what the Reformers believed about the sovereignty and glory of God as they pertain to salvation and the spiritual deadness of sinful man. While the Reformers openly proclaimed a God-glorifying *monergism* (the belief that God's grace alone is able to raise dead, rebellious sinners to spiritual life without their cooperation), many now take the position of the Reformers' opponents by preaching *synergism*, the concept that God's grace is incapable of accomplishing salvation without the assistance and cooperation of man.

As a Reformed Baptist, I firmly believe in God's absolute sovereignty over all things,<sup>1</sup> man's slavery to sin (including our inability to please God, as well as our spiritual deadness in sin),<sup>2</sup> and the inevitable result of these truths, which is the *unconditional* electing grace of God. In light of God's timeless sovereignty over all creation and man's corruption in sin, God's election of a people unto salvation *must* result, as Scripture says, in election finding its basis not in the creature but in the merciful purpose of God *alone*. I am very thankful to the JOURNAL for this opportunity to briefly explain, and defend, this vital truth.

I will divide this point-counterpoint discussion into two sections. This first installment (this issue) will address the "God-ward" aspect of this crucial subject. The second installment (next issue) will discuss issues that relate to man's deadness in sin, the nature of faith, and its relationship to regeneration.

#### UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION DEFINED

The 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith<sup>3</sup> states:

God's decree is not based upon His foreknowledge that, under certain conditions, certain happenings will take place, but is independent of all such foreknowledge.

By His decree, and for the manifestation of His glory, God has predestinated (or foreordained) certain men and angels to eternal life through Jesus Christ, thus revealing His grace. Others, whom He has left to perish in their sins, show the terror of His justice.

The angels and men who are the subjects of God's predestination are clearly and irreversibly designated, and their number is unalterably fixed.

Before the world was made, God's eternal, immutable purpose, which originated in the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, moved Him to choose (or to elect), in Christ, certain of mankind to everlasting glory. Out of His mere free grace and love He predestined these chosen ones to life, although there was nothing in them to cause Him to choose them.

Not only has God appointed the elect to glory in accordance with the eternal and free purpose of His will, but He has also foreordained the means by which His purpose will be effected. Since

His elect are children of Adam and therefore among those ruined by Adam's fall into sin, He willed that they should be redeemed by Christ, and effectually called to faith in Christ. Furthermore, by the working of His Spirit in due season they are justified, adopted, sanctified, and "kept by His power through faith unto salvation." None but the elect partake of any of these great benefits.

### A BIBLICAL DEFENSE

The art and science of biblical interpretation firmly establish unconditional election and the correlative truth of monergism. The Reformed position's strength is exegesis — the interpretation of the text in light of its grammar, syntax, and context. The doctrine is proved by (1) the direct statements of Scripture; (2) the teaching of the Bible concerning the incapacity of man to do anything that is pleasing to God without God's first freeing the sinner from the bonds of death; and (3) the teaching of those passages that combine these two truths into an undeniable whole.

Unconditional election is a truth stated directly in Scripture. Paul said, God "chose<sup>4</sup> us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to [or, "on the basis of"] the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:4–6, NASB, emphasis added).

First, the divine acts of choosing and predestining are placed in the time-frame of eternity itself. This election to salvation (not merely to an opportunity to believe, but to the fullness of salvation, as seen in the use of such terms as "holy," "blameless," "sonship," etc.) occurs prior to any human action. Second, this is a personal action: the direct object of "chose" and "predestined" is a personal pronoun, "us." Individual persons, not classes or groups, are chosen to holiness and adoption. Third, God's will, not man's, determines His act of saving a sinner. Never is any other basis of this divine choice presented in Scripture. The phrase "according to" or "on the basis of" ushers us directly into the only biblical answer to the question: "Why one and not another?" The answer given is that it is based on the "kind intention of His will." The Greek term used by Paul refers to a choice that is to someone's benefit. It is God's gracious choice, based on His own will, that brings salvation to any person at any time. This fact further proves that this is to the praise of His glorious grace. If anything human were mixed in, this could not be said.

The same truths come out in Paul's tremendous "Golden Chain of Redemption" in Romans 8:29–30, where we are presented with an unbreakable chain of divine actions: God foreknows<sup>5</sup> a certain people (identified later as "God's elect"). All those whom He foreknows He predestines; everyone He predestines He calls; everyone He calls He justifies; and everyone He justifies He glorifies. Every action is divine; every action is certain—so certain, in fact, that the past tense is used to emphasize this certainty. We again see the unconditional aspect of God's work of salvation: nowhere can the chain be broken, and never is a link of human sufficiency inserted. Everyone who is predestined is glorified. All who are glorified were chosen by God in eternity past. Paul's teaching is clear and compelling.

So universal is this belief in the sovereignty of God in election that Luke made mention of it in Acts 13:48. There we read: "Upon hearing this, the Gentiles rejoiced and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed<sup>6</sup> to eternal life believed." The belief of the Gentiles was the result of, surely not the cause of, the appointment to eternal life by God Himself. Our faith is the result of God's election, not the other way around. This is so much a part of NT thinking that, without a moment's hesitation, Paul said, "It is by His doing you are in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:30). It is not by our doing, or by a combination of our actions and God's grace, but by His doing that we are in Christ Jesus, so that we can boast only in Him (1 Cor. 1:31).

Some are surprised that one of the strongest affirmations of this divine truth is found in Jesus' words in John 6:37–45. Here, in explaining the unbelief of the Jews, Jesus taught unconditional election in the most monergistic tones possible. We will look at His testimony to man's inability (6:45, 65) in our next installment. For now, His teaching in these words is our focus: "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out." Again no room for human autonomy is allowed:

the action of the giving of the Father to the Son<sup>7</sup> precedes and therefore determines the identity and number of those who come to Him. The Father lovingly gives an elect people to the Son (John 17:9). As a result, infallibly, invariably, without possibility of failure (John 6:38–39, 44, 65) every single one of those so given will come to the Son.

How can such a statement be made if salvation is a matter of a synergistic cooperation of God's grace that tries to save while man's will allows it to succeed? Verses 38–39 tell us that it is the Father's will for the Son that the Son lose none of those who have been (past tense, completed action) given to Him. We know Christ cannot fail to do the will of the Father; hence, the Son must be able to save, perfectly, every single one of those given to Him by the Father. This is consistent only with unconditional election and monergism, not with conditional election and synergism.

We see that the Scriptures are replete with testimony to the sovereignty of God and the freedom of His electing grace. His choice cannot be determined on the basis of human actions. Christians should safeguard and proclaim God's freedom, not human autonomy. Only when we understand this vital truth do we understand how our entire salvation is to the "praise of His glorious grace." When we truly understand this, we will proclaim the gospel to all without fear, knowing that God will not fail to bring salvation to His chosen — all to His own praise, honor, and glory.

## NOTES

Soli Deo Gloria

1. Job 14:5; Ps. 135:6; Prov. 16:9; Dan. 4:34–35; Isa. 45:5–7; 46:9–10; Eph. 1:11; Acts 4:27–28. Bible citations are from the New American Standard Bible.
2. John 8:34; Rom. 8:7–8; Eph. 2:1–3.
3. [www.prbc.org/Confession.htm](http://www.prbc.org/Confession.htm)
4. The direct object of the verb "to choose" is not a class, but "us," and is clearly personal in that it is unto adoption and forgiveness, which *persons*, not *classes*, experience.
5. This term does not mean "to know actions before they take place" when God is the one "foreknowing." When God is the subject, in the New Testament, the object is invariably *persons* not *actions* (Rom. 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:20). In light of the Old Testament meaning of "to know," the word in this passage means to choose to enter into loving and intimate relationship with someone beforehand. See my discussion in *The Potter's Freedom* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press, 2000), 198–200.
6. A common attempt to avoid the force of this phrase is to say the middle voice should be used. This ignores the fact that the paraphrastic construction used here is to be translated as a pluperfect. See *The Potter's Freedom*, 187–89.
7. Using the present tense here, but the perfect tense in verse 39.

## Is Faith Really a Condition of Salvation?

By George Bryson

By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which He determined with Himself whatever He wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of those ends, we say that he has been predestined to life or death.<sup>1</sup>

— John Calvin

God elects a specific people unto Himself without reference to anything they do. This means the basis of God's choice of the elect is solely within Himself. His grace, His mercy, His will. It is not man's actions, works, or even foreseen faith, that "draws" God's choice. God's election is unconditional and final.<sup>2</sup> — James White

James White, my counterpart in this debate, embraces the Calvinistic doctrine of unconditional election, sometimes referred to as the second point of Calvinism. I do not. Because the election to which

unconditional election refers is *election unto salvation*, I will “cut to the theological chase” and answer the more practical (and I believe the more biblical) question: Does God require that a lost person believe in Jesus Christ as a *condition of salvation*? The reason is simple. With all due respect to many devout Christian believers, I not only reject the Calvinist doctrine of unconditional election, but also I believe it to be nothing more than a theological invention of Calvinism based on the unscriptural *Calvinistically defined* doctrine of sovereignty and predestination. This does not mean that I do not believe God is sovereign or that He has not predestined all that was, is, or will be. I do (see Ps. 115:3; Eph. 1:11). I believe also, however, that Scripture teaches that God *sovereignly ordained* that faith in Christ be a real *condition* for salvation and not (as Calvinists teach) a mere *consequence* of election (see Acts 16:31).

How would you answer the following two questions? Is God sovereign? Are everyone and everything (acts, words, thoughts, intentions, motives, events, etc.) predestined according to God’s Sovereign will?

### **GOD REALLY IS SOVEREIGN**

If you say yes to the first question (as I do), you must also (logically) say yes to the second question, as I know my Calvinist friends would agree. To be more specific, I would say if God is truly sovereign, then everyone and everything must be predestined according to God’s sovereign will. I believe when something predestined (which is everything comes to pass, it is simply the outworking of sovereignty (or sovereign control) from all eternity to all eternity. I believe if something could come to pass that God did not predestine, then that something would happen, by definition, independently of God. If something could or did happen independently of God, then God would not be sovereign or be in sovereign control of everything that happens.

To surrender sovereignty is logically impossible. If an eternal God could ever not be absolutely sovereign, it would mean He never was absolutely sovereign. That would mean we are not talking about the God of the Bible. It would be like saying God surrendered His absolute holiness (even if just for a moment). If an eternal God is absolutely holy, holiness must be an eternal constant. . A corollary to my view of divine sovereignty is that God has ordained everything. From all eternity He ordained everything that was, is or will be. I believe (in accordance with what I am convinced is taught in Scripture) God’s sovereignty is absolute and predestination is all encompassing (Dan. 4:34–35).

### **SALVATION IS SOLELY THE ACT OF GOD**

I believe God can and does save a lost human being and only God can and does accomplish anything that can rightly be considered a work of salvation. I believe the saving work (i.e., redemption, atonement, forgiveness, etc.; Eph. 1:7; 1 John 2:2) accomplished through the cross of Christ was all and only a work of God. I believe only God can and does savingly regenerate or give new and eternal life to the spiritually dead (John 1:13). I believe only God can and does savingly justify the ungodly Rom. 8:33). The reverse of this is that I do not believe man can or does accomplish anything of a saving nature. He does not, cannot, and need not pay any of the price of redemption. Christ paid it all on the cross (John 19:30). Man cannot, does not, and need not forgive himself of his sins (Luke 22:20; Heb. 9:2). He cannot, does not, and need not regenerate or justify himself. Salvation is, therefore, all from God and not in any way from man. Nevertheless, Calvinists refer to the view I have just articulated by the theological pejorative, synergism.

### **MAN (NOT GOD) MUST REALLY BELIEVE TO BE SAVED**

Why? Because I also believe, in accordance with what I am convinced is taught in Scripture, that God requires that a lost human being believe in Jesus Christ as a condition of salvation (John 3:14–18; 6:33–40; 20:24–31). I believe:

- Only those who put their trust in Jesus Christ can enjoy the saving benefits available because of the work of God.
- All who put their trust in Jesus Christ become recipients of the saving benefits of the work of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16–17).

From the human side of the salvation issue, I believe it is faith alone in Christ that results in the salvation of the lost (Eph. 2:8–9). In effect, Calvinists have confused the biblical truth that God requires a lost person to believe in Jesus Christ (as a condition of salvation) in order for him or her to be saved by God with the unbiblical error that a person can or does make a contribution to his or her salvation and thereby becomes a cosavior with God. It would seem that to avoid the latter error, Calvinists have needlessly denied the former truth. Just because the candidate for salvation has some presalvation responsibility (i.e., to believe in Jesus Christ), does not make him or her even partially a Savior. Most mainstream Calvinists would agree with me that in some sense:

- All people should believe in Christ and become saved (John 10:39, see also John Calvin's Commentary on John 3:16).

Calvinists disagree with me that:

- All people are enabled (i.e., enlightened, drawn) to believe in Christ.

Calvinists agree with me that:

- All who are enabled to believe (and, in fact, do believe) are not enabled to believe because they should believe in Him but because the Holy Spirit enables them to do so (John 1:9; 6:44; 12:32).

Calvinists disagree with me that:

- A person who is enabled to believe in Jesus Christ is not thereby made a believer; that is, a person must also choose to come to Christ in faith after he or she is enabled to do so (Matt. 22:3; John 5:35–40).
- A person becomes a believer only by choosing to do so, though he or she can only choose to do so because God enables him or her to believe (John 6:44; 12:32; Acts 16:31).
- Faith in Christ is only possible because of what God does, but it is not inevitable because of what God does. God's enabling work is not designed to make us believe but to make it possible for us to believe (2 Cor. 5:18–21).

In stark theological contrast:

- Calvinists believe some of the people who ought to believe in Jesus Christ are unable to believe in Jesus Christ and will never be enabled to believe in Jesus Christ (see Calvin's commentaries on John 3:16).
- Calvinists believe only some people (a transitional class they call the elect) are enabled to believe in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (see Calvin's Commentaries on John 3:16).
- Calvinists believe these same people that are enabled to believe are, at the same time, unable not to believe in Jesus Christ.
- Calvinists believe that the Holy Spirit, when He regenerates human beings, also makes these people believers or makes these people believe.

### **MONERGISM OF THE CALVINIST KIND**

The type of monergism that Calvinists embrace, in effect:

- Makes God both the object of faith and the subject of faith.
- Makes God both the giver of the gift of new and eternal life and the one who accepts that gift on behalf of the recipient.

Calvinists say if you receive (preregeneration) the gift of eternal life, you are thereby the giver or cogiver of that gift. The logic of this escapes me. Nevertheless, as Calvinists see it, there can be only one will involved in the saving of a human being. If you make a choice to be saved (i.e., you must believe as a condition of salvation), then you are, according to Calvinism, helping to regenerate yourself, paying part of the price of redemption, and so on. What makes a theological conviction or commitment monergistic, however, is not about how many wills are involved in the saving of a person but how many saviors

actually save the person. If man (along with God) was able to (or did) accomplish something of a saving, redemptive, or atoning nature, that would constitute synergism.

### RECEIVING IS NOT GIVING

Suppose a man works extremely hard to earn enough money to buy his mother a home. Having earned enough money, suppose he takes that money and actually buys a home for his mother. He does all the work to earn the money and pays the entire price of the home. All the mother must do to have and enjoy that home is accept it from her son. Would that acceptance make his mother a coworker of the son or a cobuyer of the home? I do not think so; yet, this is what Calvinists say about those of us who believe we must accept the gift of God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ and what He has done for us.

While Calvinists give theological lip service to the place and importance of faith, Calvinists do not see faith as a condition of salvation, but instead they reduce it to a mere consequence of election, irresistible grace, and regeneration; that is, if you are among a transitional class of people called the elect, you will believe and cannot do otherwise, because you irresistibly will be drawn to God and regenerated, at which time you will be made a believer. If a person is not among that class, it is just too bad for that person. Is this really the message and meaning of John 3:16?

### NOTES

Is Faith Really a Condition of Salvation?

1. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, iii, xxi, sec. 5, 206.
2. James R. White, *The Potter's Freedom*, (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press, 2000), 39.

## James White's Rebuttal

In seeking to understand George Bryson's position, I confess experiencing great confusion as to how his view is consistent with itself. He asserts that God is sovereign over all things and that God has decreed all that comes to pass. If this is so, as I surely agree, then it follows that the specific number and the identity of the elect is a part of that decree; yet, there does not seem to be a fixed number of elect people in Bryson's position.

Next, there seems to be a problem in the use of the term *regeneration*. If regeneration is the giving of spiritual life to one who is spiritually dead, how does it follow that Bryson can place the exercise of saving faith *prior to* regeneration so that God simply *enables* belief but does not *grant faith*? Are we to believe God *enables* all people to believe in this fashion, but only some act upon the enablement, thus resulting in only those people being born again?

We will see in part two that this is contrary to the biblical teaching of John 6:44, Romans 8:7-8, and so on. Furthermore, how then does God know the number of the elect before time itself, as we noted in Ephesians 1? Is this mere passive "foreknowledge" or a part of the decree? If a part of the decree, why decree the enabling of those not chosen? Why would this take place? We are not told.

Bryson's presentation of what "Calvinists" believe is particularly troubling. A number of statements are made that are simply incorrect. For example, he says Calvinistic monergism "makes God both the *object of faith* and the *subject of faith*." This is untrue. God does not *believe* in place of the elect person. The gift of faith is an *ability tied directly to the new nature*. A person who has received a heart of flesh and has gone from being a God-hater to a God-lover in the miracle of regenerating grace *naturally* looks to Christ and believes in Him. God is not believing *through* that person. The Scriptures say love and hope are gifts of God's Spirit as well, but no one would say God is doing the loving or hoping in our place. Furthermore, he asserts that Calvinism "makes God both *the giver of the gift of new and eternal life* and *the one who accepts that gift* on behalf of the recipient." This is also untrue. God does not accept the gift in the place of the elect.

Both of these assertions are in error because they do not take seriously a major aspect of biblical theology: the spiritual deadness of man in sin. Regeneration is resurrection to spiritual life: the necessity (and wonder!) of God's saving His elect people perfectly is realized when we consider *the desperation and the plight of man in sin*. Faith *must* be a gift because of the radical depravity of man and his spiritual deadness in sin. Bryson misses this point, for he says, "Calvinists say that if you *receive* (preregeneration) the gift of eternal life, you are thereby the *giver* or *cogiver* of that gift. The logic of this escapes me. Nevertheless, as Calvinists see it, there can be only *one will* involved in the saving of a man." The issue, instead, is man's *inability* to believe (John 6:44, 65; etc.) and his need for regeneration in order to please God (Rom. 8:7-8). The fact that man is radically corrupt, together with God's eternal decree of election so plainly witnessed in Scripture, is powerful evidence of the biblical support for the Reformed position.

Bryson wrote, "What makes a theological conviction or commitment monergistic, however, is not about how many wills are involved in the saving of a man, but how many saviors actually save a man." In reality, monergism, by its very definition, speaks to whether it is a *sovereign act wholly of God* or whether it is a matter of *cooperation between God and man*. It is a redefinition of the historical use of the word (let alone its basic meaning) to say it refers to how many "saviors" there are; but the question should be pressed: Can the one Savior save dead rebel sinners without asking for their assistance? Is it Bryson's position that Jesus had to ask Lazarus's permission prior to raising him from the dead? Was there a "condition" Lazarus had to fulfill *before* new life could be granted to him?

Is not a Savior, by definition, free to save by the sole exercise of his own power (i.e., *monergistically*)? Bryson's position is difficult to understand, for while saying God alone saves, he then adds, "All men are *enabled* (i.e., enlightened, drawn) to believe in Jesus Christ." No reference is given, and as we will see in the next presentation, Jesus' teaching on what it means to be "drawn by the Father" does *not* allow us to make a universal application, unless we wish to promote the idea of universalism itself (i.e., that all people will be saved). Jesus taught that the ones the Father draws to the Son are the very ones the Father gave *to* the Son for salvation (John 6:37-39) — the elect, and *all* who are drawn are likewise raised to eternal life (John 6:44). If all people are drawn, then all will be raised up, which is not Bryson's position. The evidence for the unconditional election of men and women unto salvation throughout Scripture leaves us with no doubt as to its teaching.

## George Bryson's Rebuttal

In the 950 words allowed for rebuttal, it is impossible to address every issue raised by James White in his essay affirming the Calvinist doctrine of unconditional election that *effectively* denies (or at least undermines) the biblical truth that salvation is *through* faith. I will therefore restrict my comments to the implications of what White says about monergism, synergism, and the golden chain of salvation.

### THE MONERGISM OF CALVINISM

If White is right in his first definition of monergism, then I am a monergist, and White should concede as much; for I believe God's grace alone can and does "raise dead, rebellious sinners to spiritual life without the need of the cooperation of man." If that is all White means by monergism, however, then he is not a Calvinist; for the monergism of Calvinism does not merely say God's grace alone is *able* to raise the spiritually dead or that God *does not need the cooperation of man* to regenerate a human being. I cannot imagine that any thinking evangelical would blatantly deny the *ability* and *self-sufficiency* of God and His grace.

The question is not about what God is *able* to do. He could turn the moon to cheese if He decreed. Nor is it about what God needs. He needs nothing. He is, has always been, and will always be sufficient in Himself. The question is: What has God required, if anything, of a human being, relative to his or her

salvation? Fortunately, Paul and Silas give an unambiguous answer to the question: "What must I do to be saved?" They say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:30–31). If we are to take what White says in his essay seriously, we could easily conclude that he believes God can't raise the spiritually dead to life through faith or on the condition of faith in Christ. This is probably because he really does not mean to say what he says. At least I hope not.

### SYNERGISM

White also defines "the concept of *synergism*, [as] the idea that God's grace, without the assistance and cooperation of man, is incapable of accomplishing salvation."

If White's definition of synergism is correct, then I cannot be a synergist, for I believe God is certainly able to save with or without man's cooperation or with or without man's believing in Christ. The question is not or should not be: Can God accomplish salvation with or without man's believing in Christ? The question is: How does He accomplish salvation? The answer is that He has chosen, in accordance with His own sovereign will, to save by grace *through* faith. To say, however, that God cannot save without cooperation (i.e., believe in Christ as the condition of salvation) is no less insulting to the omnipotence of God than it is insulting to the sovereignty of God when we say He must save without faith (i.e., cooperation). Moreover, He not only *can* save through faith, but He also declares that He *does* save through faith in Christ. Faith in Christ is the sole, sufficient, and necessary condition of salvation.

Commenting on the apostle Paul's statement in Ephesians 2:8–10, Calvin said:

The salvation of the Ephesians was entirely the work, the free work, of God but they had obtained this grace by faith. On one side, we must look at God; and on the other, at men. God declares that He owes us nothing; so that salvation is not a reward or recompense, but mere grace. Now it may be asked how men receive the salvation offered to them by the hand of God? I reply by faith. Hence he concludes that there is nothing of our own, if on the part of God, it is grace alone, and if we bring nothing but faith, which strips of all praise, it follows that salvation is not of us.<sup>1</sup>

If faith is the means to receive the gift of eternal life and salvation, it should not be confused with that gift, as it is in Calvinism.

### A GOLDEN CHAIN OF SALVATION WITHOUT FAITH?

If faith is not mentioned in Romans 8:29–30, does that mean that it is not a factor in the salvation to which these links belong? If faith is not a factor, it means that the *foreknown* are not believers. Does God know, in the Calvinist sense of knowing, nonbelievers? It would also mean that those *predestined* to conformity to Christ are not believers. Does God predestine believers or nonbelievers to conformity to Christ? It would mean that the *justified* are justified without faith. Can a person be justified and not a believer? It would mean that the *glorified* are not believers. Will nonbelievers be glorified, or is glorification reserved for the believer? Actually, the message of Romans 8:28–30 and beyond is that "all's well that ends well" for the *believer*.

In their zeal to protect the truth of salvation by grace, Calvinists unnecessarily deny the truth of salvation by grace *through* faith. In effect, they have replaced *sola fide* (faith as the sole condition) with *nola fide* (i.e., faith as a mere consequence).

Nevertheless, Jesus said that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that *everyone believing in Him* should not perish but have everlasting life....*The one believing in Him* is not condemned, but *the one not believing* is condemned already, because he has *not believed* in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:16, 18; emphases added).

### NOTES

George Bryson's Rebuttal

1. John Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*. D.W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 144.