



Hermeneutics: Application of PCA Theology: The Proper Motivation for “Good Works” Is Love for God not Assurance; John M. Campbell’s Critique of Calvinism

12. The application of this system is as follows:
 1. Under total depravity human volition is not capable of responding to God.
 2. In eternity past, God selected a predetermined few for salvation known as the “elect.”
 3. In time, Jesus Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice was effectual only for these predetermined few, the rest being classified as the “reprobate” and who remain forever condemned to the lake of fire.
 4. But the “elect” are enabled to believe in Christ by means of an “irresistible grace” provided by the Holy Spirit which overrides their status of total depravity and amplifies their volition’s ability to respond to the Gospel, an asset not provided to the reprobate. If the reprobate should express faith in Christ it is a “temporary faith” and not efficacious for salvation.
 5. The “true believer” or the “elect” will persevere until death which means that he will maintain a positive attitude toward the plan of God, he will be enabled to perform good works, and he will not deviate significantly from a righteous life which over the course of his life will provide him assurance that his faith was a “saving faith” and not the “temporary faith” of the reprobate.
13. In our study we took a great deal of time examining the fallacies of five-point Calvinism with emphasis on number 3: limited atonement.
14. We were able to document that these doctrines were not those of Calvin but rather of Theodore Bèza and were broadened in England by William Perkins and in Scotland by Samuel Rutherford.
15. The critical issue here has to do with one’s assurance. When the claims of hyper-Calvinism are taken to their logical ends the result is a convoluted system that takes the focus off God’s grace.
16. Spiritual growth should have as its motivation a love for the God Who saved us with the objective of leaning more about Him so that we might more effectively serve Him through the production of divine good.
17. However, limited atonement takes the focus off the grace of God and places it on the necessity to produce good works in order to confirm one’s salvation.
18. Thus spiritual growth is stymied by legalism since divine mandates are viewed not as a means developing a divine viewpoint toward one’s responsibilities in life but rather as yet another task to perform in order to confirm one’s election.
19. When Calvinism entered into Scotland there emerged a debate about the form it should take. One who recognized the spiritually debilitating effect that high Calvinism had on the people of his parish was John McLeod Campbell. His observations are presented in the Preface to M. Charles Bell’s book by Professor James B. Torrance of the University of Aberdeen:

Bell, M. Charles. *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance.* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1985), 5-6:



In the early nineteenth century, Scottish preacher and theologian, John McLeod Campbell, wrote in his *Reminiscences* how as a young minister he was deeply disturbed by the introspective, joyless, legalistic religion of many in his day and in his own congregation in Rhu \roo\ in Dunbartonshire, (a former county in Scotland) and tells us that he made it his early concern to give his people 'a ground for rejoicing in God' by calling them back to the freeness and universality of God's grace. He felt that the major reason for his people's introspective lack of joyful assurance was the high Calvinistic doctrines of election and limited atonement, and the resultant calls for self-examination for 'evidences' of election. His earliest concern was therefore to direct their faith away from themselves to the love of God in Christ in whom we are forgiven and who calls us to 'joyful repentance'.

20. Regardless of the efforts of pastors such as John McLeod Campbell, the theology of hyper-Calvinism found its way into the Westminster Confession and this document continues to be the profession of faith for many Protestant denominations in America today.
21. The impact this theology is having on Protestant Christianity is extensive. It has crept into denominations that once were steadfast in defending the gospel of "faith alone in Christ alone" while rejecting the idea that "works" are associated in any way with one's salvation.
22. Today these denominations circumvent the clear revelation of Scripture that salvation is freely given and eternally secured through faith alone in Christ alone and the accompanying efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit.
23. Their abandonment of this doctrine gives insight into the confusion that seems to plague the souls of so many we encounter. I have often heard people say concerning their prospects for eternity in heaven that "I hope I'm good enough," or "I don't know if I'm saved, I hope I am."
24. The reason they are doubtful and have so little confidence is because they have been tragically misled into believing that Christ did not die for all mankind but only for a predetermined few.
25. In some cases the "philosophy" of hyper-Calvinism results in the assumption that salvation is a two-part process that includes (1) faith in Christ, followed by (2) the accumulation of a lifetime of "good works" that, in the end, God will hopefully accept as sufficient for one's transfer to heaven.
26. Although they assert that salvation is by grace through faith they then turn to both empiricism and rationalism to confirm the assurance of salvation.