

13. Principle: God invented free will to function either for or against Him; the choice lies with each individual. This applies to the decision to believe or not believe the gospel.
14. Therefore, it may be concluded that although in eternity past God *knew* those who would believe in Christ for salvation He *did not decree* them to do so.
15. One may not conclude that knowing a thing is going to occur means that God willed it to occur. What God willed is for each person's soul to be supplied with free will with which they may respond to the gospel of Christ or reject it.
16. PRINCIPLE: In human history, the sovereignty of God and the free will of man coexist by divine decree. This excerpt elaborates:

Many things that occur are results of angelic or human free will acting contrary to God's desires. He nevertheless decided or willed that these things would take place. Thus, He makes our volition truly free.⁴

17. There are some Protestant denominations that erroneously conclude that election is a solitary act of God, that certain individuals in human history are predetermined to believe in Christ and that all others are purposefully left reprobate by divine decree. This is the false doctrine of supralapsarianism. This fallacy is addressed by this citation:

No event is directly effected or caused by the decree. The decree merely establishes what will be caused, but the decree itself is not the cause. The fact that a thought or action on your part is in the decree does not mean that the decree caused you to think or do it. The cause is your own free will. Your thoughts are in the decree because, in eternity past, God had the wisdom to know *what* you would think and to not omit from His planning the fact that you *would* think it!⁵

II. The Lapsarian Controversy: The Bèza Distortion

1. It is this controversy that has resulted in the formation of several Protestant denominations in the United States.

⁴ Ibid., 298.

⁵ Ibid., 304.

2. We will hold this section to its bare essentials but we must observe how the false doctrine of limited atonement encroached upon orthodox doctrine of unlimited atonement and with which a false lapsarian order of the elective decrees.
3. John Calvin (1509–1564) correctly taught the doctrine of “unlimited atonement”: that salvation is an act of the Holy Spirit on behalf of anyone who freely expresses faith alone in Christ alone for forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life.
4. However, this view was distorted into a heresy by his successor at Geneva, Theodore Bèza (1519–1606). It is important to know that this man did great damage to the West’s understanding of critical doctrines of Scripture.
5. When King James I authorized the translation of biblical manuscripts into the English language, he commissioned about 54 scholars of which 47 were divided into six groups to take on the task.
6. These men were stationed at the universities of Cambridge, Oxford, and Westminster and over seven years produced what became known as the King James Version or the Authorized Version.
7. The Encyclopaedia Britannica has this entry regarding the primary resource used to translate the King James Version into English:
Jerome's Latin Vulgate⁶ served as the basis for translations of both the Old and New Testament into Syriac, Arabic, Spanish, and many other languages, including English.⁷
8. However, Jerome’s Latin Vulgate was not the edition used as the primary resource for King James’s translators but that of Theodore Bèza. Following John Calvin’s death in 1605, Bèza succeeded him as undisputed leader in Geneva.

⁶ “Jerome (ca. 347–419). Biblical scholar and translator who aimed to introduce the best Greek learning to Western Christianity. Jerome’s greatest accomplishment was the Vulgate. The chaos of the older Latin translation was notorious. Working from the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, Jerome, after twenty-three years of labor, gave Latin Christianity its Bible anew” (B. L. Shelley, “Jerome,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984], 578).

⁷ “Biblical Translation,” in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia* (2010), s.v. 2:196.

9. One of the significant works that Bèza produced was his Latin edition of Jerome's Latin Vulgate. The version that King James's translators chose to use was not that of Jerome but Bèza.
10. The end result of that decision is discussed by Derek Wilson under the heading, "Limitations of the Translation":

The use the translators made of available sources was not faultless. They took as their basic New Testament text an edition by Theodore Bèza, Calvin's successor at Geneva. This book, known later as the Received Text, contained a late Greek manuscript with a Latin translation and was believed to be the most reliable text available. In fact it was marred by scribal errors, additions, and omissions which had accrued over the centuries. Bèza was not sufficiently critical of his source. (p. 116)

The King James Version was, thus, very far from being the last word on the translation of Scripture into the English vernacular. It was very much a book of its time—a magnificent achievement but not without its faults; a rendition of a timeless text but one coloured by the issues and controversies of the day. Any attempt to take it "out of history" and elevate it to a position above criticism and contradiction does no favours to either it or the religion of English-speaking Christians.⁸ (p. 117)

11. It turns out this was not the only damage Bèza did to orthodox doctrine. John Calvin did not develop an erroneous doctrine of election, but in the hands of Bèza, it did:

Bèza's chief contributions to the Swiss Reformation were securing Calvin's gains in Geneva and solidifying the Presbyterian system. However, election was not the central focus of Bèza's ecclesiology. Bèza created tension in this doctrine by treating it elsewhere in a scholastic manner along rather rigid supralapsarian lines.⁹

12. Protestant Christianity has not yet recovered from the damage done by Bèza and the most damage done was to the doctrine of election.

III. Differences between Calvin's and Bèza's Doctrines of Atonement:

⁸ Derek Wilson, *The Peoples' Bible: The Remarkable History of the King James Version* (Oxford, Eng.: Lion Hudson, 2011), 166, 117.

⁹ J. H. Hall, "Bèza, Theodore," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 135.

1. The question we will address is whether John Calvin was a “hyper-Calvinist” or a “moderate Calvinist.” If he established the principles of Limited Atonement then he must be regarded as the source for present-day hyper-Calvinism. If he established the principles for Unlimited Atonement then he must be regarded as the source for present-day moderate Calvinism.
2. To determine what his personal belief was, we simply consult his writings and his commentaries in particular. In Calvin’s commentaries we find sufficient documentation to claim with confidence that Calvin taught the doctrine of unlimited atonement. Our first reference is from R. T. Kendall’s, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*:

Isaiah 53:12c ... He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of the many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (KJV)

He bore the sin of many. I approve of the ordinary reading, that He alone bore the punishment of many, because on Him was laid the guilt of the whole world. It is evident from other passages, and especially from the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, that ‘many’ sometimes denotes ‘all’. (p. 214.)

Indeed, our Lord Jesus was offered to all the world. For it is not speaking of three or four when it says: ‘God so loved the world, that he spared not His only Son.’ But yet we must notice what the Evangelist adds in this passage:

‘That whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but obtain eternal life.’ Our Lord Jesus suffered for all and there is neither great nor small who is not inexcusable today, for we can obtain salvation in Him. Unbelievers who turn away from Him and who deprive themselves of Him by their malice are today doubly culpable. For how will they excuse their ingratitude in not receiving the blessing in which they could share by faith? (pp. 225-26.)

John 1:28 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. (KJV)

And when he says *the sin of the world* he extends this kindness indiscriminately to the whole human race, that the Jews might not think the Redeemer has been sent to them alone. From this we infer that the whole world is bound in the same condemnation; and that since all men without exception are guilty of unrighteousness before God, they have need of reconciliation. John, therefore, by speaking of the sin of the world in general, wanted to make us feel our own misery and exhort us to seek the remedy.

Now it is for us to embrace the blessing offered to all, that each may make up his mind that there is nothing to hinder him from finding reconciliation in Christ if only, led by faith, he comes to Him. (p. 216.)

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (KJV)

That whosoever believeth on him should not perish. The outstanding thing about faith is that it delivers us from eternal destruction. For He especially wanted to say that although we seem to have been born for death sure deliverance is offered to us by the faith of Christ so that we must not fear the death which otherwise threatens us. And He has used a general term, both to invite indiscriminately all to share in life and to cut off every excuse from unbelievers. Such is also the significance of the term 'world' which He had used before. For although there is nothing in the world deserving of God's favour, He nevertheless shows He is favourable to the whole world when He calls all without exception to the faith of Christ, which is indeed an entry into life. (p. 217.)

John 17:2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. (KJV)

Christ does not say that He has been placed in command of the whole world to bestow life indiscriminately. But He restricts this grace to those given to Him. But how were they given? For the Father has also subjected to Him the reprobate. I reply: Only the elect belong to His own flock, which He guards as a shepherd. Hence, the kingdom of Christ extends to all men, but it is saving only to the elect who follow the Shepherd's voice with willing obedience. (p. 219.)¹⁰

¹⁰ R. T Kendall, "Appendix 1: Bible Commentaries by John Calvin," in *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1979), 214, 225–26, 216–17, 219.