

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 nor 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.

3. Since the original publication of Kendall's book in 1981, those of the limited atonement camp have sought to discredit his research. In the Preface of his New Edition, Kendall answers his critics:

'A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.' Even if I answered my critics line by line the 'Yes, but' syndrome would not close down. I must say that I have yet to read a refutation of my research that was done by one who had no aspirations along traditional Reformed lines.¹¹
4. What Kendall did discover is that the limited atonement view was developed in Calvin's name after his death by his protégé and successor, Theodore Bèza. This is exposed by Kendall in chapter two of his book, "Theodore Bèza and the Heidelberg Theologians" (pp. 29-41).
5. Fundamental in the development of Bèza's doctrine was the belief that Christ died for the elect only.
6. This means that those individuals who were elected by God in eternity past are the *only ones* for whom Christ died. All others are said to be "reprobate." These were brought into existence with no hope of salvation and are left to die in their sins without hope or recourse.
7. Kendall summarizes this view: "In a word: those for whom Christ died must necessarily be saved; those for whom He did not die must necessarily be damned."¹²
8. Bèza therefore takes the *death* of Christ, which is summed up by the word "atonement," and links it with the doctrine of *election* in such a way that election *predetermines* one's salvation.
9. From this concept Bèza developed a system that later became known as supralapsarianism.

¹¹ R. T. Kendall, "Preface to this New Edition," in *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, new ed. (Waynesboro, Ga.: Paternoster Press, 1997, vii.

¹² Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism* (1979), 29fn2.

10. This term is not as complicated as it appears. The prefix *supra-* means “above, over, or before.” In the middle is the word “lapse” which comes for the Latin word *lapsus*, meaning “fall.” The two suffixes at the end are *-ian* and *-ism*. The former refers to those who believe in the principle that man is fallen. The latter indicates that it constitutes a belief system or a doctrine. Therefore, if you believe in the doctrine that mankind is “fallen” then you are a lapsarian and you are a proponent of lapsarianism.
11. Bèza’s system contends that in eternity past when God sovereignly determined how He would deal with the eternal future of the human race, He decreed to elect a few to salvation but not all.
12. Bèza further contended that if God’s elective decree was placed in a logical order then the act of election would occur before His decision to permit the fall. Thus, Bèza’s system became known as supralapsarianism: he believed the doctrine of the fall, but asserted that election logically occurred *before* the fall.

The Supralapsarian Order of the Elective Decrees

- 1- **The decree to elect some to be saved and to reprobate all others.**
 - 2- **The decree to create men, both elect and non-elect.**
 - 3- **The decree to permit the fall.**
 - 4- **The decree to provide salvation for the elect.**
 - 5- **The decree to apply salvation to the elect.**
13. Note that according to Bèza, the decrees of election and reprobation occur first and thus have logical priority over the decrees to create mankind and permit the fall.
 14. The decree to elect some to be saved and to reprobate all others results in the doctrine of double predestination: men, not yet created, are predetermined for either heaven or the lake of fire and human free will is not a substantial consideration.
 15. Note the heresy: some men not yet created and not yet fallen are condemned by the justice of God! These so-called “reprobates” are not candidates for redemption because Christ did not die for their sins.

16. Another inconsistency: the elect are said to be redeemed before they are created and before they fall. But redemption can only apply to those who are fallen!
17. Nevertheless, Bèza contends that God through Christ saves the elect only. The death of Christ on the cross becomes the *means* of saving the elect, not the faith of the individual.
18. Bèza interprets Ephesians 1:4 to mean that since election occurred in eternity past then salvation of the elect is an accomplished fact. (p. 32)
19. Problem: How does the elected person know of his election and thus have assurance of his salvation?

(End JAS1-36. See JAS1-37 for continuation of study at p. 361.)

20. Unlimited atonement asserts that Christ died for all mankind. Thus when the sinner expresses his personal faith in Christ he may surely know he is saved.
21. But under the principle of limited atonement, the sinner has no way of knowing whether or not he is among those for whom Christ died. The resultant dilemma is evaluated by Kendall:

Bèza has told us Christ died for the elect. This makes trusting Christ's death presumptuous: 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 then we can infallibly project that we are among the number chosen from eternity: for the number of 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. (p. 32)

22. Since Christ's atoning sacrifice was limited to a predetermined few, no individual may look to Christ for assurance about his eternal future. Bèza understood the quandary his theology created but, undaunted, he came up with a solution.

NOTE: Bèza's sixteenth-century spelling is modernized:

When Satan puts us in doubt of our election, we may not search first the resolution in the eternal counsel of god whose majesty we cannot comprehend, but on the contrary we must begin at the sanctification which we feel in ourselves ... forasmuch as our sanctification from which proceeds good works, is a certain effect of the faith or of Jesus Christ dwelling in us by faith.¹ (p. 33)

23. Under Bèza's system, faith in Christ plays no major role in the salvation of the elect, but faith in one's "good works" is essential and even primary in ascertaining whether or not he is one of the elect.
24. Consequently, the object of his assurance is not the work of Christ on the cross but rather his own "good works." If a person has expressed faith in Christ he does not rely upon biblical assurances that he has eternal life. Instead, he reaches a subjective opinion about this based on a personal evaluation of his own "good works."

¹ R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, new ed. (Carlisle, Cal.: Paternoster Press, 1997), 32, 33.

25. These “good works” prove to the person that he is sanctified and that Jesus Christ indwells him. Consequently, faith in one’s “good works” is the proof that one’s faith in Christ was efficacious.
26. It is important that we discredit this immediately. The word “faith” is the translation of the Greek noun, **πίστις, (pístis)**. The verb form, **πιστεύω (pisteúō)**, is translated “believe.” The definitions of these two words are obviously synonymous:

πιστεύω, (pisteúō) 1. To believe in something; to be convinced of something. The person to whom one gives credence: Jesus and God whom one believes, in that he accepts their disclosures without doubt or contradiction. (pp. 660-61)

2. Faith in the Divinity that lays special emphasis on trust in his power and his nearness to help, in addition to being convinced that he exists and that his revelations or disclosures are true, In our literature, God and Christ are objects of this faith. (p. 661)

πίστις (pístis) 2. Trust and confidence directed toward God and Christ, their revelations, teachings, promises, and their power and readiness to aid.² (p. 662)

27. Both the noun and the verb are transitive. The merit is found in the object not the subject. The person who believes places his confidence for salvation in an object that he is certain is qualified to accomplish the desired effect: salvation and eternal life.
28. Jesus Christ is the only person qualified to accomplish this desired effect and this is stated repeatedly in Scripture.
29. Bèza was unable to find confidence in his salvation before placing confidence in his “good works.” In effect, he places his faith in his works to verify his faith in Christ.
30. However, faith by its definition asserts that the one possessing it is absolutely convinced that the Word of God is true regarding Christ as Savior. Further, one is also convinced that by believing in the Person and work of Christ, he is indeed saved, among the elect, and with eternal life.

² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 660–61, 662.