

19. 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!
20. 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.
21. 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)
22. Problem: How does the elected person know of his election and thus have assurance of his salvation?
23. 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.
24. 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 than 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)

25. 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.

Bèza directs us not to Christ but to ourselves; we do not begin with Him but with the effects, which points us back, as it were, to the decree of election. Bèza thinks ... sanctification, or good works, is the infallible proof of saving faith.³ (p. 33)

26. 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.
27. 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."
28. 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.
29. 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.⁴ (p. 662)

³ R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, new ed. (Carlisle, Cal.: Paternoster Press, 1997), 33.

⁴ 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.

30. 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.
31. Jesus Christ is the only person qualified to accomplish this desired effect and this is stated repeatedly in Scripture.
32. 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.
33. 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.
34. The definitions of **πίστις** (*pístis*) and **πιστεύω** (*pisteúō*) unite the concepts of faith and assurance: if you believe in Christ for salvation then you believe in the promises that are attached to salvation: deliverance from the lake of fire, forgiveness of presalvation sins, and the imputation of eternal life.
35. For the continuation of this important investigation by R. T. Kendall’s *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* and M. Charles Bell’s *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance*, consult lessons JAS1-101–105 at www.joegriffin.org.

James 1:18 In the exercise of His will
[aorist passive participle of βούλομαι
(*boúlomai*)] He brought us forth by the word of
truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits
among His creatures. (NASB)

1. In our analysis of this verse so far we have observed that the word “will” is the aorist passive participle of βούλομαι (*boúlomai*) which refers to divine volition.

2. It refers to God's divine purpose in eternity past when He determined to provide salvation to those who would believe in Jesus Christ. This indicates divine cognizance of the spiritual birth of those who would believe in time.
3. *Boulomai* refers to the divine decree which contains the totality of the will of God and in this case it includes divine knowledge of those who will believe during human history yet future.
4. The *will* of God refers to the *decree* of God and the passive voice should be translated, "Having been decreed in eternity past."
5. Further, an aorist participle precedes the action of the main verb which always has the indicative mood. That verb is the aorist active indicative of ἀποκυέω (*apokuéō*): "to give birth."
6. This does not refer to physical birth but rather to one's spiritual birth. This is indicated by the prefix ἀπό (*apó*) denoting origin or source which is the "Father of lights."
7. The divine decree is the origin or source of the spiritual birth. This refers to our regeneration, a technical word for salvation whereby eternal life is imputed to the believer through the agency of the Holy Spirit.
8. How is this accomplished? By the "word of truth," a general term for Scripture but in this context it refers to spiritual birth occurring at the moment of "faith alone in Christ alone."
9. In verse 17, we learned that divine grace comes down "from the ultimate source of the Father of lights." The universe was created by God, first for the angelic population and then, secondly, for the human race.
10. The original creation of Genesis 1:1 was for the benefit of the elect angels. The fall of Lucifer and his fellow rebels resulted in the original trial during which all space-time, matter, and energy of the universe were suspended according to Genesis 1:2 and Isaiah 45:18.
11. Following Lucifer's appeal, the universe was brought out of suspension and the earth was restored for habitation by the original Homo sapiens in a perfect environment.

12. When the original couple sinned they lost their perfect life, became dichotomous, and were in need of reconciliation. Faith in Christ resulted in their salvation and introduced, through procreation, the process of acquiring witnesses for the Prosecution to resolve the appeal. (Genesis 3)
13. James instructs us in James 1:15 that the sin nature's lust pattern tempts a believer's free will to commit a sin resulting in the delivery of a "child born dead," i.e., personal sin results in loss of fellowship outside the bubble.
14. In verse 18, we again see the imagery of a birth in the phrase, "He brought us forth," which is the aorist active indicative of the sentence's main verb *apokuéō* meaning "spiritual birth."
15. Here we see the new birth. Whereas an individual who was born physically alive but spiritually dead, is now born spiritually alive by means of the "word of truth," i.e., the gospel of salvation.
16. The process which makes salvation possible was devised in eternity past by the "exercise of His will." We have translated this phrase to emphasize the source of this exercise being God's divine decree.
17. In order for fallen man to have a resource to receive reconciliation through faith in Christ, God must precede that event with a divine solution.
18. This is why the grammar of this verse is so important. We have the principle, the action of the aorist participle, *boúlomai*, the divine decree, precedes the action of the main verb, *apokuéō*, the spiritual birth by means of the gospel of salvation.
19. So our expanded translation reads, "Having been decreed in eternity past, God regenerated us by a spiritual birth"
20. This context demonstrates the principle: In human history the sovereignty of God—*boúlomai*, the divine decree—and the free will of man—*apokuéō*, human volition—must coexist.
21. The decree of God must pave the way for the free will of man to have an option for or against salvation through faith in Christ.