



*Reformation*  
& **REVIVAL**  
**JOURNAL**

*A Quarterly for Church Renewal*

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# REFORMATION & REVIVAL JOURNAL

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1. To encourage *reformation* in local Christian churches worldwide.
2. To promote the cause of *revival* and spiritual awakening through prayer and the provision of resources to aid Christian leaders.

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The conviction of the staff and editors of the *Reformation & Revival Journal* is that awakening, of the kind seen in the First Great Awakening in America, wedded to the doctrinal concerns of the historic Protestant Reformation as expressed in the terms *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide*, is needed in our generation.

The views expressed in this publication should be considered as the personal opinions of the authors and are not to be taken as an official editorial perspective.

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(630) 221-1817

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## *INTRODUCTION*



*John H. Armstrong*

*P*rotestant Christian theology teaches that individuals are saved fully by the grace of God on the ground of Christ's atoning death and victorious resurrection. This doctrinal formulation is actually consistent with the whole of historic Christian tradition, East and West. What is distinct about Protestant theology is its resolute assertion that this gracious salvation is appropriated only by faith, apart from any human merit or law-keeping. Simply put, in classical Protestant thought there is no room for human cooperation, of any sort, in the saving of the human person. There are disagreements, in later Protestant development, regarding the contribution of the human will, but even here there is still a serious attempt to consistently preserve the non-meritorious nature of human faith. This commitment is unique for a number of reasons. Some of these reasons have to do with exegetical concerns developed within Protestant history. Others flow out of a distinct Protestant and evangelical response to the theological developments of the Middle Ages.

But there has also been a concern in Protestant theology to insist that obedience and good works in the believer's life are the inevitable effect of this completely gratuitous salvation. In fact, the faith which truly saves is itself an act of obedience, at least in some Protestant thought, albeit one granted

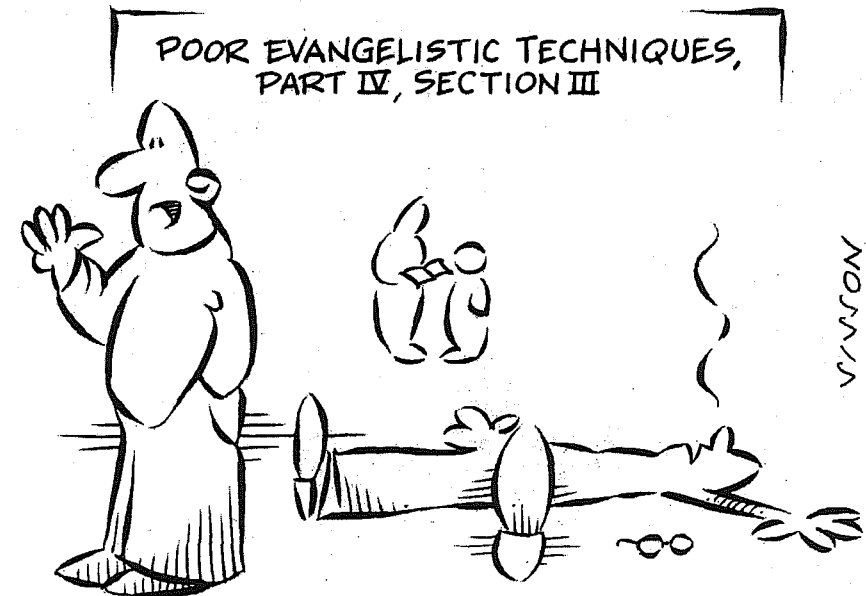
by the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit.

The perennial problem for Protestants in this regard has been to answer one basic question: "How is it possible to safeguard the fully gracious character of salvation without diminishing the necessity of obedience and good works, apart from which none will be saved?"

In an attempt to shed contemporary light upon this perennial question, Reformation & Revival Ministries and the Center for Cultural Leadership (California) sponsored a symposium on law and gospel in Chicago, Illinois, in March of 2004. This symposium included twelve different speakers, and twelve excellent respondents. Each paper presented at this symposium addressed questions related to law and gospel. Ten papers were from within the confessional traditions of Protestant Christian faith. There was one Roman Catholic contribution and one from an Orthodox perspective. The goal in the entire event was to listen, to dialogue, and to better grasp the message of the Bible and the Christian Church. These addresses and responses were all recorded on tape and are available from [www.soundword.com](http://www.soundword.com) if you desire to hear the entirety of the symposium.

The conviction of the sponsors of this event was that individuals are graciously called into a covenant relationship with the living God, mediated exclusively by the redemptive work of Christ, and as covenant members they are charged with, and empowered for, *faith and obedience*. In this way, both the gratuitous character and the bilateral obligation of salvation are preserved.

Can Protestants retain the central concerns of their historical perspective while they also seek to be faithful to their reformist roots and the role of Scripture in renewing the church? Can we still be judged by Scripture while we deal fairly and honestly with our confessional traditions and concerns? I believe an affirmative answer is not only possible but necessary. This issue presents some of the material from this 2004 symposium, in a version edited for publication, with the hope that it will foster further interest in the renewal of the church by Word and Spirit.



HE SAID HE DIDN'T BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION, SO I DECKED HIM.