

## **The Doctrine of Repentance in Church History**

### **A Series on Repentance: Part 1 (R. Wilkin)**

Few issues are of more vital interest to those who believe in heaven and hell than the question of what one must do to gain entrance into heaven. Answers to this question nearly always include a reference to repentance. Throughout church history nearly every theologian has taught that repentance is essential for salvation from hell. (1) However, several disparate understandings of repentance have been advocated. This article will delineate those understandings. (2)

#### **I. The Pre-Reformation View**

From the apostolic fathers until the Reformers, essentially one view of salvific repentance prevailed. Unhappily this view knew little or nothing of grace. A system of works salvation emerged very early in the Church. Amazingly, the first generation after the Apostles distorted the good news which the Apostles had entrusted to their care. (3) On the theology of the apostolic fathers Torrance notes:

"Salvation is wrought, they thought, certainly by divine pardon but on the ground of repentance [self-amendment before God], (4) not apparently on the ground of the death of Christ alone. There is no doubt about the fact that the early Church felt it was willing to go all the way to martyrdom, but it felt that it was in that way the Christian made saving appropriation of the Cross, rather than by faith. It was not seen that the whole of salvation is centred in the person and the death of Christ. Failure to apprehend the meaning of the Cross and to make it a saving article of faith is surely the clearest indication that a genuine doctrine of grace is absent." (5)

Three main aspects of the pre-Reformation view of salvific repentance are apparent.

##### **1. Initial Forgiveness of Pre-Baptismal Sins Only**

The church fathers and their successors believed that salvation began at one's baptism. When someone was baptized the sins which he had committed until that point in life [plus his share of original *sin* through Adam] were forgiven. (6) The fathers thus believed that a person would begin the Christian life with a clean slate. Of course, the slate would not remain clean for long. Since everyone continues to be plagued with sin after baptism (1 John 1:8, 10), the Church had to develop a plan whereby post-baptismal sins could be atoned for.

##### **2. Forgiveness of Post-Baptismal Sins by Repentance/Penance**

With such a view of baptism and the forgiveness of sins it is no wonder that people began putting off baptism until they were near death. In that way they could be assured of total forgiveness. The church fathers and their successors dealt with this problem by proposing repentance (i.e., penance) as the cure for post-baptismal sins. At first the early fathers debated whether major post-baptismal sins could be forgiven at all. It was generally agreed that even "mortal" sins could be forgiven; however, there was some disagreement as to how many times a person could repent and be forgiven. (7) A few leaders) such as Hermas, held that there could be only one opportunity for repentance after baptism. (8) That view did not prevail, however. The prevailing view of the early fathers was that one could repent and be forgiven on several occasions. (9) At first they did not specify exactly how many times someone could repent for fear of giving churchmen an implicit license to sin. This, of course, led some people to put off penance until their deathbeds. By the fifth century, in spite of the fear of giving people a license to sin, the Church uniformly specified that a person might repent and be forgiven an unlimited number of times. (10)

##### **3. Repentance Defined as Contrition, Confession, and Performing Prescribed Acts of Penance**

The apostolic fathers taught that in order to retain salvation from eternal judgment one had to feel sorry for and confess his post-baptismal sins to a priest and then do whatever acts of penance were prescribed by the priest. (11) The Latin Fathers translated, or rather mistranslated, the NT words *metanoëo* and *metanoia* to reflect their theological bias. They translated those terms as *poenitentiam agite* and *poenitentia*, "to do acts of penance" and "acts of penance," respectively. (12) Those mis-translations unfortunately became part of the Old Latin and then the Latin Vulgate versions of the Bible. It was not until the Reformation that those translations were given a serious and widespread challenge.

**The Doctrine of Repentance in Church History**  
**A Series on Repentance: Part 1 (page 2)**

**Summary**

Imagine that you were a member of the Church in the fifth century under such a system. Your parents firmly believed these things. You were baptized as an infant. As a young child you were taught the necessity of penance and confession to your confessor priest both by your parents and the priest. By the time you became a teenager you were convinced that salvation was only in the Church and that you had to strive hard against sin if you were going to get into heaven. Oh, how you hoped you would get in! You hoped you were good enough today and that you would stay good enough tomorrow. You hoped you wouldn't die right after committing a mortal sin such as adultery, idolatry, murder, or denying the faith while being tortured. You wondered exactly which sins were mortal sins in God's eyes. What if you died after being jealous or envious or hateful and it turned out those sins were big enough to send you to hell? Sometimes you even feared that your confessor priest may not have been strict enough with you when he meted out your penance. After all, there was no set penalty for given sins. What if your priest made a mistake? What if you didn't do enough to atone for your sins? You were terribly frightened of hell and without any assurance of escaping its flames.

Robert Williams well summed up the view of the early Church on salvific repentance when he wrote:

"By and large, it was far easier to gain admission to the Church than to re-enter it, once its ideals had in any way been renounced by its adherents. The initiated, through baptism, were given a clean sheet. Whatever evils had previously stained a man's life, it was forgiven and forgotten, as a new adventure in Christ began. It was when the Church had to deal with those who had soiled the sheet after their admission, that difficulties arose. Light offenders were met by different forms of censure, such as temporary exclusion from Holy Communion or varying degrees of penance. In dealing with the mortal sins of idolatry, murder, and adultery, not to mention apostasy, Church leaders differed concerning the form of punishment." (13)

Surely there has always been a remnant of people who knew and apprehended the grace of God in Christ, even in the years between the Apostles and the Reformation. However, the vast majority of people knew nothing of grace. They knew only legalism and Pharisaism. There was a serious need for a mass reform of the Church. It was centuries in coming. Indeed, for more than a millennium terrible darkness covered the Church until the Reformation.

**II. Reformation Views**

The Reformers challenged all three pillars of the Church's view on salvific repentance.

**1. Initial Forgiveness of all Sins, Pre- and Post-Baptismal**

Calvin, (14) and to a lesser extent Luther, (15) taught that all of one's sins, pre- and post-baptismal, were forgiven when a person became a Christian. Such teaching clearly marked a radical break from Romanism. What would become of the practice of confessing one's sins to his priest and performing the mandated acts of penance? Logically, it would cease in churches which adopted the thinking of the Reformers on forgiveness of sin. As we know, that is exactly what happened.

**2. Penance Unnecessary for Forgiveness of Post-Baptismal Sins**

Calvin completely rejected the idea that one must perform acts of penance to atone for post-baptismal sins in order to maintain one's salvation. (16) He taught that Christ's death, once appropriated, finally and completely atoned for all the sins one would or ever could commit.

Luther, however, in light of his linear understanding of conversion, (17) held that while penance itself was unnecessary, one who abandoned his faith in Christ and fell into sin would perish unless he returned to Christ again through renewed faith. Commenting on Jerome's view, the established position of the Church, that penance was "the second plank after shipwreck," Luther wrote:

**The Doctrine of Repentance in Church History**  
**A Series on Repentance: Part 1 (page 3)**

"You will likewise see how perilous, indeed, how false it is to suppose that penance is the "the second plank after shipwreck," and how pernicious an error it is to believe that the power of baptism is broken, and the ship dashed to pieces, because of sin. The ship remains one, solid, and invincible; it will never be broken up into separate "planks." In it are carried all those who are brought to the harbor of salvation, for it is the truth of God giving us its promise in the sacraments. Of course, it often happens that many rashly leap overboard into the sea and perish; these are those who abandon faith in the promise and plunge into sin. But the ship itself remains intact and holds its course unimpaired. If anyone is able somehow by grace to return to the ship, it's not on any plank, but in the solid ship itself that he is borne to life. Such a person is the one who returns through faith to the abiding and enduring promise of God." (18)

Luther rejected penance formally. He felt that penance "torture[d] poor consciences to death." (19) However, practically speaking he still held to the necessity of something not unlike penance. In order to be saved in the end from eternal judgment, according to Luther, one must endeavor to continue in the faith, both morally and doctrinally. (20)

### **3. Repentance (*Metanoia*) Defined as a Change of Mind**

In contrast to the Church's definition of *metanoia* as involving contrition, confession, and the performance of acts of penance, Calvin and Luther concluded that it retained its classical sense of "a change of mind." (21) Salvific repentance according to Calvin and Luther was a change of mind whereby one recognized his own sinfulness and need of forgiveness and then turned in faith to God to provide that forgiveness in Christ. (22) In essence, then, Luther and Calvin viewed salvific repentance as an essential part of saving faith.

#### **Summary**

The Reformation introduced a new view of salvific repentance. Calvin taught that all sins were forgiven at the point of conversion, that -penance was unnecessary for the forgiveness of post-baptismal sins, and that the NT term *metanoia* referred to a change of mind whereby one recognizes his sinfulness and need of forgiveness in Christ. Luther agreed completely with the last of those points and somewhat with the first two. Those who are burdened for the purity of the Gospel of grace find it disappointing that Luther held to a linear view of salvation and the possibility of forfeiting it by departing from the faith.

The monolithic power of the Roman Church had been broken. No longer would the proponents of grace be limited to a few modern-day Elijahs. The Reformers looked back to Christ and the Apostles rather than the church fathers for their view of salvific repentance and the Gospel. Would their followers retain a high view of grace? Or would they, like the apostolic fathers, lose a proper understanding of grace and depart into a man-made, legalistic "Gospel"?

### **III. Post-Reformation Views**

The post-Reformation period has seen the continuation of the previously held views and the emergence of new ones.

The Roman view of salvific repentance has continued from the Reformation until the present.

#### **Contrition, Confession, and Performing Acts of Penance**

The views of Calvin and Luther have continued as well. However, their views have in some cases been modified so that today there are basically three Protestant views of salvific repentance. (23)

#### **Turning Away from Sin**

Those holding to this view consider salvific repentance to be the actual turning away from one's sins and not merely a willingness or intention to do so. (24) They would tell an alcoholic, for example, that in order to become a Christian he would first have to stop getting drunk.

**The Doctrine of Repentance in Church History**  
**A Series on Repentance: Part 1 (page 4)**

**A Willingness or Resolution to Stop Sinning**

Others argue that one needs to be *willing* to turn from his sins. (25) They would tell an alcoholic that in order to become a Christian he would first have to be willing to stop getting drunk. They would stop short of saying that he actually had to stop drinking before he could be saved.

People holding to these first two views might stress to varying degrees the need to be sorry about one's sins and to commit oneself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

**A Change of Thinking**

Some Protestants suggest that salvific repentance does not involve turning from one's sins or even the willingness to do so. Rather, they argue that salvific repentance is a change of mind whereby a person recognizes his sinfulness and need of salvation and sees Jesus Christ as the sinless Substitute who died on the cross for his sins. (26) They thus understand NT *metanoia* in its classical sense.

They would tell an alcoholic that he had to recognize his sinfulness and need of salvation and place his faith solely in Jesus Christ in order to be saved from eternal condemnation. They would avoid giving the impression that the individual had to change his lifestyle or be willing to do 50 in order to obtain salvation from eternal condemnation.

**Variations of the Three Protestant Views**

It should be noted that some persons who hold to the three Protestant views of salvific repentance do not necessarily believe that salvation once obtained is secure and inviolable. Some Protestants teach that salvation can be lost due to unfaithfulness subsequent to one's conversion. Such teaching is actually inconsistent with the Reformers' view of depravity and Jesus' once and for all substitutionary death. Some Protestants have, in effect, a Roman Catholic view of salvific repentance—albeit one in which confession to a priest and formal penance are substituted with confession directly to God and an informal system of penance. However, we will call these variant views "Protestant" since those who hold them are members of Protestant and not Catholic or Orthodox churches. In reality, then, there are actually six Protestant views of salvific repentance:

- 1) turn from sins and keep on doing so to obtain and keep a salvation which can be lost, (27)
- 2) turn from sins to obtain an eternally secure salvation,
- 3) be willing to turn from sins and then, after conversion, actually turn from sins as a manner of life to gain and keep one's salvation,
- 4) be willing to turn from sins to obtain an eternally secure salvation,
- 5) change your mind about yourself and Christ to gain initial salvation and then turn from your sins as a manner of life thereafter to keep that salvation, and
- 6) change your mind about yourself and Christ to gain an inviolable salvation.

**IV. Conclusion**

From the early second century until the Reformation one view of salvific repentance prevailed, the Roman position. (28) It held that at one's baptism only his prior sins are forgiven and that subsequent sins could only be forgiven by confessing one's sins to a priest and then carefully carrying out the acts of penance which he prescribed.

The Reformation introduced two new views. Calvin held that at conversion all of one's sins, pre- and post-conversion, were forgiven and that confessing one's sins to a priest and performing acts of penance were not needed. Luther held a position somewhere between that of Calvin and the Roman Catholic Church. He believed that confession to a priest and

**The Doctrine of Repentance in Church History**  
**A Series on Repentance: Part 1** (page 5)

performing acts of penance were not needed to maintain one's salvation. However, while he rejected those formally, he continued to believe that one could fail to obtain final salvation by choosing to indulge in a life of sin.

Since the Reformation the Roman view has continued and six Protestant views have emerged. We must be very careful not to base our theology on a majority vote of our contemporaries or predecessors. The majority may be wrong-and in this fallen world it often is.

Why, then, should we study the history of interpretation? Because by so doing we are better able to come to and maintain our own conclusions and to interact with others, believers and unbelievers. If, for example, I understand the Roman position on salvific repentance, my witness to Catholics is strengthened considerably.

Which of the views stated is the one correct view of salvific repentance? Future articles in this series (29) will demonstrate that the change-of-mind-secure-salvation view is the biblical one. If a person must give up something or even be willing to do so to obtain salvation, then it is not really a free gift. If one must live an obedient life to keep salvation, then it is conditioned upon faith plus works, and grace is nullified. Other views of salvific repentance fail to grasp the gravity of our plight as sinners in the hands of a holy God. Nothing which we can do to try and clean up our lives will impress God. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can atone for our sins. And, the only way to appropriate Jesus' blood is by faith alone in Christ alone. The only thing we need to give up is a self-righteous attitude. We must cease viewing ourselves as good enough to merit salvation and instead place all of our trust on what Jesus Christ did on the cross for us as our Substitute.

No one can work his or her way to God. Yet many try. The only thing people need to do is recognize their complete helplessness and need of a Savior and then put their faith in Jesus Christ and Him alone to save them from their sins. A change of thinking is needed. Once one becomes a believer in Jesus Christ, he can be assured, based on the promises of Scripture, that he is and always will be a part of God's eternal family. God has done everything for us except that we must receive the free gift. That is our part.

The Gospel presents the cure for sin and its consequence, hell. The message of the Gospel is extremely powerful as long as it is not distorted. Pure living water will forever quench the thirst of parched souls.

**A Chart of the Views of Salvation Repentance**

Pre-Reformation (Roman Catholic Church)	Reformation (Protestant)	Post-Reformation
1. Initial Forgiveness of Pre-Baptismal Sins Only  2. Forgiveness of Post-Baptismal Sins by Repentance/Penance  3. Repentance Defined as Contrition, Confession, and Performing Prescribed Acts of Penance	1. Initial Forgiveness of all Sins, Pre- and Post-Baptismal  2. Penance Unnecessary for Forgiveness of Post-Baptismal Sins  3. Repentance ( <i>Metanoia</i> ) Defined as a Change of Mind	Roman Catholic: same as pre-reformation  Protestant (6 variations): 1. turn from sins and keep on doing so to obtain and keep a salvation which can be lost 2. turn from sins to obtain an eternally secure salvation 3. be willing to turn from sins and then, after conversion, actually turn from sins as a manner of life to gain and keep one's salvation 4. be willing to turn from sins to obtain an eternally secure salvation. 5. change your mind about yourself and Christ to gain initial salvation and then turn from your sins as a manner of life thereafter to keep that salvation. 6. change your mind about yourself and Christ to gain an inviolable salvation.

**The Doctrine of Repentance in Church History**  
**A Series on Repentance: Part 1 (page 6)**

References:

1. Throughout this article the expression salvific repentance will be used to refer to that repentance which is necessary to escape *eternal* condemnation.
2. This paper draws heavily on my doctoral dissertation. Cf. Robert N. Wilkin, *Repentance as a Condition for Salvation in the New Testament* (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1985).
3. See Thomas E. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).
4. *Ibid.*, 135.
5. *Ibid.*, 138.
6. See, for example, Hermas, *Mandate*, 4.3.1, 6; Polycarp, *Letter to the Philippians*, 2, 5; Justin Martyr, *The First Apology*, 15-16; Origen, *Homilies on the Psalms*, On Psalm 37 (38): 2, 6; Ambrose, *Concerning Repentance*, 2.11; Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 1.17-18; Anselm, *De Concordia III: Grace and Free Choice*, 8; and Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV: 71-72.
7. For example, the two-volume work by Ambrose, *Concerning Repentance*, was his defense against the Novatianists' claim that the church could not forgive mortal sins such as apostasy. Ambrose upheld the established church position that it had the power to remit post-baptismal sins of any magnitude.
8. See Hermas, *Mandate*, 4. 3. 6. See also Ambrose, *Concerning Repentance*, 2.10, where he teaches that lesser sins could be repented of daily but not mortal ones. Ambrose held that there could be only one penance for mortal sins.
9. See, for example, Clement of Rome, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 7-9; 50-51; 56-57; Polycarp, *Philippians*, 2, 5; and Cyprian, *Epistle 52* (56 Oxford Edition), *Treatise on the Lapsed*, and *The Seventh Council of Carthage*.
10. See, for example, Jerome, *Letter 122: To Rusticus*, 3; and Augustine, *On the Creed*, 15-16.
11. See Hermas, *Mandate*, 4. 3. 6; Clement of Rome, *First Epistle*, 8-9; and Polycarp, *Philippians*, 2.
12. See William Douglas Chamberlain, *The Meaning of Repentance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943), 27-28; Edgar R. Smothers, "The New Testament Concept of Metanoia," *Classical Bulletin* 10 (1933): 7-8; Aloys Herman Dirksen, *The New Testament Concept of Metanoia* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1932), 66-67; and John Cecil Anderson, "Repentance in the Greek New Testament" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1959), 14ff.
13. Robert Williams, *A Guide to the Teaching of the Early Church Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 142.
14. See Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4. 15. 3.
15. Luther held to a linear view of conversion. That is, he believed that a person's salvation was not finalized until he died. He taught that one could "lose" his salvation—or better, fail to realize it in the end—if he ceased believing in Jesus Christ and indulged in a life of sin. He viewed Christ's death as covering all of one's sins, pre- and post-baptismal, as long as one strove to remain in the faith. Of course, such a disclaimer effectively contradicted his claim about the sufficiency of Christ's death and eliminated the possibility of assurance. See *Luther's Works*, vol.36, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1520*, 60-61, Marilyn Jean Harran, "The Concept of *Conversio* in the Early Exegetical and Reform Writings of Martin Luther" (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1978), and Fred J. Prudek, "Luther's Linear Concept of Conversion" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1979).
16. See Calvin, *Institutes*, 3. 24. 6; 4. 19.14-17.
17. See footnote 15 above.
18. *Luther's Works*, vol. 36, *The Babylonian Captivity*, 61.
19. *Ibid.*, 89.
20. *Ibid.*, 59-61, 89, 123-24. One should also note that the study by the Lutheran scholar Lowell Green (*How Melancthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel: The Doctrine of Justification in the Reformation* [Fallbrook, CA: Verdict Publications, 1980]) indicates that Luther held to the necessity of a believer persevering in a walk of faith in order to receive final salvation (see, e.g., 260).
21. See Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 48, *Letters* (May 30, 1518 Letter to John von Staupitz), 65-70; Calvin, *Institutes*, 3. 3. 1-16; and Dirksen, *Metanoia*, 79-80 and "Metanoieite," *The Bible Today* 19 (1965): 1262, 1266.
22. See Calvin, *Institutes*, 3. 3. 5, 18; 3. 4. 1-39; and Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 48, *Letters*, 66-67.

**The Doctrine of Repentance in Church History**  
**A Series on Repentance: Part 1 (page 7)**

23. However, each of these views has two forms. Thus, as we shall soon see, in actuality there are six Protestant views of salvific repentance. It should be noted as well that all of these views teach that salvific repentance must be combined with faith in Jesus Christ for a person to gain salvation from eternal judgment.
24. See, for example, James Montgomery Boice, *Christ's Call to Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 105-114; James Graham, "Repentance," *Evangelical Quarterly* 25 (1953): 233; George Peters, "The Meaning of Conversion," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 120 (1963):236, 239; Rudolph Schnackenburg, *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament* (Freiburg: Herder and Herder, 1965), 25-33; Charles Scobie, *John the Baptist* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 80, 112, 148; A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1912), 832-35; and Eugene La Verdere, "The Need for Salvation: A New Testament Perspective," *Chicago Studies* 21 (1982): 234.
25. See, for example, William Barclay, *Great Themes of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 72-73; Lewis Bookwalter, *Repentance* (Dayton, OH: United Brethren Publishing House, 1902), 30, 43, 53-55; William Douglas Chamberlain, *The Meaning of Repentance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943), 47, 143-44, 216, 222-23; Daniel Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 151-52; Kenneth Gentry, "The Great Option: A Study of the Lordship Controversy," *Baptist Reformation Review* 5 (1976): 57-62, 77; Billy Graham, *The Meaning of Repentance* (Minneapolis: The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, 1967), 5-11; George Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 95-106; Howard Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God* (London: Epworth Press, 1969), 37-38; J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1961), 70-73; Kazimierz Romaniuk, "Repentez-vous, car le Royaume des Cieux est tout proche (Matt. iv. 17 par.)," *New Testament Studies* 12 (1966): 264; Robert Shank, *Life in the Son* (Springfield, MO: Wescott Publishers, 1960), 324; Bob Stokes, *Repentance, Revival, and the Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 10-16, 24; John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity* (London: InterVarsity Fellowship, 1958), 111-32, and "Must Christ be Lord to be Savior?," *Eternity* 10 (1959): 15, 17; Lehman Strauss, *Repentance* (Findley, OH: Dunham Publishing Co., 1959), 13-19; and Effie Freeman Thompson, *METANOEO and METAMELEI in Greek Literature Until 100 A. D., Including a Discussion of Their Cognates and of Their Hebrew Equivalents* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908), 24-25.
26. See, for example, Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947-48), 3:372-78; G. Michael Cocoris, *Lordship Salvation—Is It Biblical?* (Dallas, TX: Redencion Viva, 1983), 11-12; Milton Crum, "Preaching and Worship: Dynamics of Metanoia," in *Preaching and Worship* (N. P.: Academy of Homiletics, n.d.), 88-89; H. A. Ironside, *Except Ye Repent* (New York: American Tract Society, 1937), 34, 53, 171-76; Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), 116-17; Richard A Seymour, *All About Repentance* (Fayetteville, GA: Clarity Publications, 1974), 33, 46, 62; and Treadwell Walden, *The Great Meaning of Metanoia* (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1896), 4-9, 79-81, 125, 151.
27. A few years ago I saw the following message on the marquee of a church that teaches this view of salvific repentance: "The Way to Heaven is 'Turn Right and Keep Straight.'"
- 28) While the Eastern Church's position on repentance was (and is) not identical to the Roman position, it was essentially the same in its major details. The Eastern Church taught that penance was a sacrament designed to provide forgiveness for post-baptismal sins and that penance involves contrition and confession to a priest. For further information on the Eastern Orthodox view of salvific repentance see Frank Gavin, *Some Aspects of Contemporary Greek Orthodox Thought* (Milwaukee: Morehouse Publishing Co., 1923), 358-70, and Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Centenary Press, 1935), 133-34.
- 29) Future articles will include: "The Doctrine of Repentance in the Old Testament," "The Doctrine of Repentance in the New Testament," and "How to Communicate the Doctrine of Repentance Clearly."