

According to certain analyses, we may use causal language either in a broad, improper sense to mean *complete* cause or in a strict, proper sense to mean *primary* or most significant cause, given some perspective or point of view from which causal primacy or significance can be judged. If we keep this distinction in mind, we may be the better able to understand what is and what is not properly meant by the several uses of the *particula exclusiva* in characteristic Reformation formulations.

Thus, if we are told, for example, that *scripture alone* is the authority for Christian faith and life, the presupposed context of the statement is not the broad, improper context of all that properly is or can be, in some sense, or in some way, authoritative for Christian existence, but rather the strict, proper context of what is properly the primary or most significant Christian authority. Similarly, if we are told that we are saved by grace alone, the point is not to deny that things other than grace are also involved in our salvation, but only that there is anything so involved that has the same primacy or significance that grace has. Thus, even granted that our own free response to grace through faith is also involved, it neither is nor could be primary or most significant in the way in which grace alone can be so. We are saved *by* grace alone *through* faith alone.

n.d.; rev. 10 September 2003; 24 June 2009