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***THE WHITEFIELD PAPERS***

*By*

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***“Reformed Systematic Theology”***

NOTES

on

Dr. Gordon H. Clark’s *Predestination*

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## INTRODUCTION

Reformed Methodist Theology (RMT) is designed, in part, to bring together and compare the very best of the theologies of the Methodist Rev. George Whitefield (1714 – 1770) and the Methodist Rev. John Wesley (1703 – 1791), two great leaders of the Great Awakening Revival of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, as well as the theologies of the Early Church and of the Protestant Reformation—Anglicanism, Lutheranism, and the Reformed tradition. It is premised upon the notion that no one theologian has a monopoly upon theological truth, and that all Christian theology ought to be held against the backdrop of the letter and the spirit of the Gospels (particularly the Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6: 9-13) and the Parables of Christ).

This paper addresses the difficult Calvinist theological doctrine of predestination. The Apostle Paul specifically mentions predestination in his Letter to the Romans, Chapter Eight. Augustine of Hippo wrote prolifically upon the doctrine of predestination during the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The new reformed 16<sup>th</sup>-century Church of England later enshrined the doctrine of predestination into its various Articles of Religion. Within the Reformed Church on the continent, controversy over the doctrine of predestination arose during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. And within the new Methodist movement of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, both Whitefield and Wesley could fall into conflict over this doctrine of predestination as well. Reformed Methodism thus seeks, among other things, the synthesize the very best texts on predestination from the Sacred Scriptures together with ideals about predestination from leading Reformed theologians.

This is a book report of the Reformed theologian Dr. Gordon Clark’s<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “**Gordon Haddon Clark** (August 31, 1902 – April 9, 1985) was an American philosopher and Calvinist theologian. He was a leading figure associated with presuppositional apologetics and was chairman of the Philosophy Department at Butler University for 28 years. He was an expert in pre-Socratic and ancient philosophy and was noted for defending the idea of propositional revelation against empiricism and rationalism, in arguing that all truth is propositional. His theory of knowledge is sometimes called scripturalism. Clark was raised in a Christian home and studied Calvinist thought from a young age. In 1924, he graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a bachelor's degree in French and earned his doctorate in Philosophy from the same institution in 1929. The following year he studied at the Sorbonne. He began teaching at the University of Pennsylvania after receiving his bachelor's degree and also taught at the Reformed Episcopal Seminary in Philadelphia. In 1936, he accepted a professorship in Philosophy at Wheaton College, Illinois, where he remained until 1943 when he accepted the Chairmanship of the Philosophy Department at Butler University in Indianapolis. After his retirement from Butler in 1973, he taught at Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Georgia, and Sangre de Cristo Seminary in Westcliffe, Colorado. Clark's denominational affiliations would change many times. He was born into and eventually became a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. However, he would eventually leave with a small group of conservatives, led by John Gresham Machen, to help form the Presbyterian Church of America (renamed the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1938) and would be ordained in the OPC in 1944. However, in 1948, following the Clark-Van Til Controversy, he joined the United Presbyterian Church of North America. Following the UPCNA's 1956 merger with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (the same denomination

important work, *Predestination*.<sup>2</sup> More to the point, this paper compares Dr. Clark’s theological definitions and understanding the “predestination” to Article 17 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion (Church of England), and extrapolates as to whether “Calvinist” predestination is coterminous or compatible with “Anglican” predestination. It is the position of the author of this paper that these two forms of Calvinist “predestination” are not coterminous: Clark’s version of predestination represents the “supralapsarian” definition, whereas the Anglican version of predestination represents not only the “infralapsarian” definition, but also is closer in definition to that which is found in St. Augustine of Hippo’s *On Grace and Free Will*. In other words, the Augustinian and Anglican definitions of “predestination” reflect the “infralapsarian” version.<sup>3</sup> Table 1, “Calvinist Lapsarian Views of Predestination.”

**Table 1. “Calvinist Lapsarian Views of Predestination”**

<b>Calvinist Lapsarian views</b>		
	<b>Supralapsarianism Antelapsarianism Pre-lapsarian or prelapsarian</b>	<b>Infralapsarianism Sublapsarianism Postlapsarianism</b>
<b>Decree to:</b>	Save some and condemn others	

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from which the OPC had separated from in 1936) to form the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Clark joined the Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Synod in 1957. Clark was instrumental in arranging a merger between the RPCGS and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church to form the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod in 1965. When the RPCES became part of the Presbyterian Church in America in 1982, Clark refused to join the PCA and instead entered the unaffiliated Covenant Presbytery in 1984. Clark was also elected president of the Evangelical Theological Society in 1965. He died in 1985 and was buried near Westcliffe, Colorado.” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gordon\\_Clark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gordon_Clark)

<sup>2</sup> Gordon H. Clark, *Predestination* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1987).

<sup>3</sup> “Infralapsarianism teaches that all men are sinful by nature (due to The Fall), are thereby condemned through our own sin (freewill), and that God had foreknowledge of whom He would rescue from condemnation. The infralapsarianist view follows Ephesians 1:4-6, "... even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved" (ESV). That is, some are chosen to be elect (foreknowledge) but not created elect.”

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logical\\_order\\_of\\_God%27s\\_decrees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logical_order_of_God%27s_decrees)

Decree to:	Create the elect and the reprobate	Create human beings
Decree to:	<b>Authorize the Fall (by which all deserve to be condemned)</b>	
Decree to:		Save some from condemnation and leave others condemned
Decree to:	Provide salvation only for the elect	

This “infralapsarian” view of predestination also seems to be the theological view expressed by Anglican priest George Whitefield (1714 – 1770) in his “Letter to Mr. Rev. John Wesley” in 1741. For in that letter, Rev. Whitefield states expressly that his theological definition of “predestination” was taken directly from Article 17 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion (Church of England).<sup>4</sup> Hence, we may safely conclude that the Whitefield-led Methodist movement held to an “infralapsarian” view of predestination—a view that was not incompatible with that held by the Anglican Church, as found in Article 17 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, to wit:

### **XVII. Of Predestination and Election.**

Predestination to Life is **the everlasting purpose of God**, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath **constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us**, to deliver from curse and damnation **those whom he hath chosen** in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: **they through Grace obey the calling:** they be justified

<sup>44</sup> Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Revival* (East Peoria, IL: Banner of Trust Pub., 2019), p. 556 (“This is the established doctrine of scripture, and acknowledged as such in the 17<sup>th</sup> article of the church of England, as Bishop Burnet himself confesses; yet dear Mr. Wesley absolutely denies it.”)

freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.

As the godly consideration of Predestination, and our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal Salvation to be enjoyed through Christ as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God: So, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.

Furthermore, we must receive God's promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture: and, in our doings, that Will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the Word of God.

But Dr. Clark's *Predestination* reflects the "supralapsarian" view of predestination which two of Calvin's followers founded on the European continent:

"The first to articulate the supralapsarian view were **Theodore Beza** and **Jerome Zanchius**. A few later Calvinists - in particular those influenced by Beza's theology - embraced supralapsarianism. In England Beza's influence was felt at Cambridge, where William Perkins and William Ames held to it, as well as Franciscus Gomarus in the Netherlands. Later, William Twisse wrote two comprehensive books on supralapsarianism, one in Latin entitled *Vindiciae Gratiae, Potestatis, Et Providentiae Dei* and a shorter but lengthy English work entitled *The Riches of God's Love unto the Vessels of Mercy*. **In the last century, the most recent proponents of supralapsarianism include Abraham Kuyper, Herman Hoeksema, Arthur Pink, Gordon Clark. Historically, it is estimated that less than 5% of all Calvinists have been Supralapsarian.** Also according to Loraine Boettner and Curt

Daniel, no major Reformed theologian and very few modern Calvinists are supralapsarian.<sup>[6]</sup> The infralapsarianism view seems to be expressed in the Synod of Dort in 1618. In the Canons of Dort, First Point of Doctrine, Article 7, it states:

Before the foundation of the world, by sheer grace, according to the free good pleasure of his will, [God] chose in Christ to salvation a definite number of particular people out of the entire human race which had fallen by its own fault from its original innocence into sin and ruin

However the Synod did not reject those who held to a supralapsarian position....<sup>5</sup>

Nor does Dr. Clark's *Predestination* reject the "infralapsarian" position, but rather he merges both the "supralapsarian" and "infralapsarian" views of predestination into his own singular, general philosophy of predestination. For instance, Dr. Gordon Clark's *Predestination* presents the supralapsarian-Calvinist theological doctrine of predestination as being fully compatible with the general infralapsarian view of predestination that was held by Augustine of Hippo (and, presumably, of Martin Luther.)<sup>6</sup> Regarding Augustine of Hippo, Dr. Clark writes: "[Augustine] wrote two tractates that everyone should read: *Grace and Free Will* and *Predestination*. The position there taken had characterized Augustinians and Calvinists from that day to this"<sup>7</sup> Regarding Martin Luther, Dr. Clark analyzes and embraces Luther's position in *The Bondage of the Will*, and reaches the position that "Augustine and Luther, not to mention Calvin, appealed to Scripture."<sup>8</sup> But I note here that, in *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther does not appear to expressly address predestination and defers to Augustine's theological conclusion on the same points involving "free will." Apparently, George Whitefield also noted that Luther himself said nothing on the topic of "election."<sup>9</sup> Hence, Dr. Clark's embrace of Luther's theology on "free will" as being supportive of the "supralapsarian" Calvinist doctrine on "predestination" is tenuous, since Luther himself did not say a word about "irresistible grace," "double predestination," "unconditional election," the "doctrine of assurance," the "perseverance of the saints." In a word, Luther was not himself a Calvinist. And there is nothing in

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<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logical\\_order\\_of\\_God%27s\\_decrees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logical_order_of_God%27s_decrees)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 114-116.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 114.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>9</sup> Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Revival* (East Peoria, IL: Banner of Trust Pub., 2019), p. 563 ("Thus was Luther, that man of God, who, as far as I can find, did not peremptorily, at least, hold election....")

Luther's theology on "free will" that contradicts the Augustinian position on "free will" or "predestination." As I have pointed in my attached essay, "St. Augustine of Hippo on Predestination," Augustine himself adopted an infralapsarian view of "predestination" that made room for "universal atonement" co-existing alongside "universal reprobation," in which all sinners or reprobates *need not remain within a state of reprobation*, but may accept Christ though through grace alone.<sup>10</sup> Hence, Augustine's definition of predestination is not coterminous with Clark's definition of predestination.

For it is clear that Dr. Clark's *Predestination* does not adopt Augustine's "infralapsarian" view of predestination. Instead, Dr. Clark's view of predestination is the view held by Calvin's follower Theodore Beza—a view which a "minority" view not held by Augustine, Luther, the Anglican Church, or the vast majority of sects within Western Christendom. None of the Oriental Orthodox churches or the Eastern Orthodox Church have embraced the "supralapsarian" view of predestination.<sup>11</sup> Nor did George Whitefield espouse the "supralapsarian view of predestination. In sum, it is therefore a mistake to hold that Dr. Clark's supralapsarian view of predestination reflects the typical or majority Calvinist or Presbyterian viewpoint—although many of them have embraced that viewpoint. Indeed, *less than five percent* of Reformed theologians have embraced the supralapsarian definition of predestination.<sup>12</sup>

The Reformed Methodist Theological (RMT) position holds that the "infralapsarian" view of predestination is not inconsistent with the Augustinian and (or) the Arminian-Wesleyan conception of "universal atonement," justification, and sanctification. The "predestination" view that was espoused by Anglican-Methodist priest Rev. George Whitefield (1714- 1770) was the "infralapsarian" theological viewpoint.<sup>13</sup> I agree with Rev. Whitefield that this version of Calvinist predestination is fully sustained in Article 17 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of

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<sup>10</sup> See, attached, **Exhibit A**, Roderick O. Ford, "St. Augustine on Predestination: A Primer for Calvinist and Wesleyan-Arminian Theologians: A Primer for Calvinist and Wesleyan-Arminian Theologians."

<sup>11</sup> "Despite Calvin's popularity among Protestants and the appealing systematic nature on the topic of divine grace, especially with regard to the prevenient ways in which God interacts with people. To be sure, Calvin is essential for those who claim to be part of the Reformed tradition, and Calvin, as well as the Reformed tradition, has been extensively influential among Protestants. But not all Protestants are either Calvinists or Reformed; in fact, the majority of Protestants probably reflect more the Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican views of grace as prevenient found in Wesley." Don Thorsen, *Calvinism vs. Wesley: Bringing Belief in Line with Practice* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013), p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logical\\_order\\_of\\_God%27s\\_decrees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logical_order_of_God%27s_decrees)

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Tines of the Great Evangelist of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Revival* (East Peoria, IL: Banner of Trust Pub., 2019), pp. 551- 569 ("A Letter to Rev. Mr. John Wesley").



Religion. First, Article 9 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion acknowledge Original Sin and the Fall of Man. Secondly, Article 17 does not refute or rebut the “infralapsarian” theological view that God intends to “save some and leave the rest in condemnation” and to “provide salvation only for the elect.” For this reason, it was possible for both the Calvinist Methodists and the Arminian-Wesleyan Methodists to co-exist within the same Methodist evangelical movement during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

I surmise that Dr. Gordon Clark’s supralapsarian view of predestination—a term not in existence during the 1700s—was mistakenly believed by Rev. John Wesley (1703 – 1791) to be Rev. Whitefield’s view of predestination, which led to much confusion between these two men. Indeed, Rev. Wesley deplored the idea that God would create human beings for eternal damnation while providing them with no prevenient grace and no access to Christ’s redemption, and Wesley believed that this is what Whitefield was preaching.

Perhaps during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, no one had ever made the distinction between “supra--“ and “infra--“ lapsarian views of predestination. Thus, when Rev. Wesley took up the cause of defending his Arminian position, he lumped the two types of Calvinist predestination together, and objected to them without discrimination. (Rev. Wesley did not always outright reject Calvinism altogether, especially where he said that at certain points the Calvinist and Arminian theologies were similar, but just emphasized different aspects of the same fundamental theology).<sup>14</sup> To be sure, there are decisive differences between even “infralapsarian” predestination and Arminian-Wesleyan theology on grace and justification. For instance, “infralapsarian” predestination promotes the “doctrine of assurance” and “irresistible grace,” two doctrines which the Arminian-Wesleyan viewpoint rejects. But, as a practical matter, the infralapsarian Calvinist theology is not so different that it cannot co-exist alongside the Arminian-Wesleyan doctrine of grace, even within the same “reformed” Anglican or Methodist church; because both the “infralapsarian” Calvinists and the Arminian-Wesleyan Methodists may agree upon the following most fundamental tenets of the Christian faith:

- a. That God’s election is “decreed by counsel secret to us,” whereby no man knows who shall be saved;<sup>15</sup>
- b. That God alone has foreknowledge of who shall be saved

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<sup>14</sup> See, generally, Don Thorsen, *Calvinism vs. Wesley: Bringing Belief in Line with Practice* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Art. 17, Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.

and who shall be lost;

c. That original sin has left all men in a state of reprobation;<sup>16</sup>

d. That the Gospel must be preached to *all human beings*, without discrimination;

e. That through the preaching of the word or otherwise, only *some men* shall be drawn to Christ through *God's grace alone*; and,

f. That the *rest of the men*, who are not drawn to Christ, will remain in a state of reprobation and shall be condemned to everlasting punishment.

Whether “God’s grace” is “resistible” or “irresistible” is not a relevant theological discussion, because the Christian duty to strive of outward and inward holiness is axiomatic. Moreover, the question of whether “God’s grace” be resistible or irresistible, or whether some men are “unconditionally reprobate,” is unnecessarily divisive, since “election” is “decreed [by God’s] counsel secret to us,” as stated in Article 17 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.<sup>17</sup>

## SUMMARY

Gordon Clark’s *Predestination* is 215 pages, published in 1987 by the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company. Dr. Clark is both a Calvinist and a Reformed Theologian. His philosophy and theology is a carbon copy of the orthodox Calvinist doctrines of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In *Predestination*, Dr. Clark masterfully and cogently defends the doctrines of limited atonement, irresistible election and double-predestination. “Predestination,” says he, is discussed throughout the Bible, both explicitly and implicitly, just as the “trinity”

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<sup>16</sup> Art. 9, Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.

<sup>17</sup> It is thus the Reformed Methodist Theological (RMT) position that the 18<sup>th</sup>-century argument between the Whitefield Methodists (i.e., infralapsarian Calvinists) and the Wesleyan Methodists (i.e., the Arminians) over whether there is “universal election,” was a superfluous theological arguments, because, as a practical matter, (a) the Gospel must be preached to all men indiscriminately; (b) no man living knows who will actually be saved to eternal life, or who will actually be lost to eternal damnation; and (c) the Christian mandate of inward and outward holiness and righteousness is the same.

is so discussed. In Part One, Dr. Clark divides the work in seven, easy-to-read chapters: (1) Creation; (2) Omniscience; (3) The Eternal Decree and Its Execution; (4) Pre-destination; (5) Regeneration; (6) Free Will; and (7) Epilogue. In Part Two, Dr. Clark covers the topic, “Predestination in the Old Testament.”

## **PART ONE Biblical Predestination**

### **Discussion One: How does Reformed Methodist Theology (RMT) assess Dr. Clark’s Calvinist View of Predestination?**

The Reformed Methodist Theological (RMT) embraces an “infralapsarian” view of predestination<sup>18</sup> that is patterned after the theological views of Augustine of Hippo<sup>19</sup> and Article 17 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.

Professor Gordon Clark’s *Predestination* embraces a “supralapsarian” definition of predestination that is patterned after the primitive Calvinist theology of Theodore Beza and others.

Therefore, RMT’s conceptualization of predestination is in conflict with Dr. Clark’s definition of predestination as stated in his landmark work, *Predestination*.

One of the major reasons for this conflict stems from differences in various interpretation of the book of Romans. According to Dr. Clark, author of *Predestination*, the book of Romans, Chapters 8 and 9 prove unequivocally that the “supralapsarian” definition of predestination is valid. Dr. Clark relies largely upon Romans, Chapter 9, particularly versus 15-21, which says:

<sup>15</sup> For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

<sup>16</sup> So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

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<sup>18</sup> That “infralapsarian” definition of predestination is biblically supported, and reflects the theological doctrine that God has called many, but chosen only a few (Matt. 22: 1-14).

<sup>19</sup> See, generally, Exhibit A, Roderick O. Ford, “St. Augustine of Hippo on Predestination: A Primer for Calvinist and Wesleyan-Arminian Theologians.”

<sup>17</sup> For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

<sup>18</sup> Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

<sup>19</sup> Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

<sup>20</sup> Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

<sup>21</sup> Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

Next, Dr. Clark states that Paul introduced the theology of “Predestination” in Romans 8:28-31:

<sup>28</sup> And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

<sup>29</sup> For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

<sup>30</sup> Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

<sup>31</sup> What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

According to Dr. Clark, Romans, Chapter 9, reinforces Romans Chapter 8; and God’s “assurance of salvation” and the doctrine of the “perseverance of the saints” are manifest in the doctrine of predestination. Dr. Clark supports this theological conclusion with Isaiah 55:11, which says, “My word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” Further, Dr. Clark uses the story of Esau and Jacob to bolster his theological position, stating that: “[t]he reason for God’s hating Esau and loving Jacob, before they had done any good or evil, is stated in verse eleven [of Romans

9] to be ‘that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.’”<sup>20</sup>

Dr. Clark then goes on to state that “[t]he effectiveness of God’s call is entirely because of God’s power.”<sup>21</sup> Dr. Clark says that “[p]redestination therefore neither conflicts with justification by faith nor annuls the promises. These were not made to the Jews as a nation, but to chosen individuals, to Jacob, not to Esau. No, predestination does not annul the promises: it makes their fulfillment inevitable.”<sup>22</sup> Dr. Clark says that man is God’s lump of clay: He alone make one man to honor, and another man to dishonor. Lastly, Dr. Clark writes that God alone acts and moves according to his own “good pleasure.” Dr. Clark writes that “Eudokia,” which is the Greek word for “God’s good pleasure,” and refers to “God’s sovereign will and cannot refer to man.” In other words, God controls all things.

But we Reformed Methodists agree with Rev. John Wesley’s (1703 – 1793) viewpoint on this matter, because the Calvinist theological view espoused by Dr. Clark and others have failed to take into account the entire book of Romans, namely, chapter 1 through 7, where Paul clearly and unequivocally sets forth the terms of justification and salvation. Reformed Methodists therefore defer to the Rev. Wesley’s *Predestination Calmly Considered* in defense of our own theological viewpoint that God has regenerated within all human beings a minimum amount of power to choose Christ and salvation. There is no “total depravity” that completely wipes out mankind’s ability, with God’s assistance, to choose salvation.

Rev. John Wesley masterfully addresses this passage of Scripture in Romans in *Predestination Calmly Considered*, stating that this passage in Romans 8, that all things work together for them that love God (i.e., “...whom he did predestinate, them he also called... justified... glorified”), refers to persons who are justified as per God’s “decree, unalterably fixed from eternity, ‘He that believeth shall be saved.’”<sup>23</sup> We know this is so, says Rev. Wesley, because the Apostle Paul clearly explains this point “in the first three chapters [of Romans], which he confirms in the fourth by the example of Abraham.”<sup>24</sup> For instance, Romans 2: 2, 5-11 and Romans 4:3, state:

But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>23</sup> Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, ¶ 25.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

them which commit such things....<sup>25</sup>

But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God....<sup>26</sup>

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.<sup>27</sup>

With these scriptural references, Rev. Wesley demonstrates, through looking at other verses within the Book of Romans, that the Apostle Paul's assertions in Romans 8:29-31 do not prove "unconditional election" and "limited atonement."

And with regards the Romans 9, where the Apostle Paul writes that God "will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," and "Hath not the potter power over the clay," etc., Rev. Wesley explains to mean only that "God has a right to fix the terms on which he will show mercy, which neither the will nor the power of man can alter... [a]nd that accordingly 'he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy,' namely, those that truly believe; 'and whom he will,' namely, obstinate unbelievers, he suffers to be 'hardened.'"<sup>28</sup>

For Rev. Wesley, the only unconditional thing is God's unalterable, eternal decree: "He that believeth shall be saved, He that believeth not shall be damned." And so, in Romans 9:19, where it says, "Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?"—Rev. Wesley here states this passage to mean this and only this: "Why hast thou made me capable of salvation only on those terms? None indeed hath resisted this will of God. 'He that believeth not, shall be damned.'"<sup>29</sup> This passage, says Wesley, does not mean that there are men and women who were

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<sup>25</sup> Romans 2:2.

<sup>26</sup> Romans 2:5-11.

<sup>27</sup> Romans 4:3.

<sup>28</sup> Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, Ibid, ¶ 27.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, ¶ 28.

made “unconditional reprobates” by “God’s irresistible will.” If we consider and interpret Romans, Chapter 9, in light of Romans, Chapters 1 through 8—as Rev. Wesley recommended—then the intent of the biblical author (Apostle Paul) as to justification is very clear (e.g., Romans 4:3, “For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”) Wesley’s biblical exegesis thus seems much more persuasive than Calvin’s.

We Reformed Methodists likewise defer to Augustine of Hippo’s *On Grace and Free Will* and *The City of God*, who subscribes to the “infralapsarian” view of predestination, also contending that reprobates, through grace, need not remain in their condemned state. (See, below, Exhibit A, “St. Augustine of Hippo on Predestination”). Utilizing the techniques for Reformed Hermeneutics, we Reformed Methodists hold the orthodox Jewish interpretation of the Torah in high regards, and we especially note that “predestination” as largely a foreign or unknown concept in Judaism. And since we note that Jesus of Nazareth was a practicing Jew who held the Torah in very high regards, we note that Jesus’ own words do not use the words “predestination” but neither does any of his teachings imply this doctrine. First, we note the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6: 9-15):

<sup>9</sup> After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name.

<sup>10</sup> Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread.

<sup>12</sup> **And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.**

<sup>13</sup> **And lead us not into temptation,** but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

<sup>15</sup> But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

In this prayer, we note at Verse 12, the covenantal relationship between God and man, that Christ himself acknowledges, and that is that we love one another, and that we “forgive our debtors,” for which as a just reward God shall also forgive us of our debts. Thus, this “Lord’s Prayer” does not support the “supralapsarian” view of predestination. But, to the contrary, this “Lord’s Prayer” does support the “infralapsarian,” Augustinian, and Reformed-Methodist views of predestination—which Reformed Methodism also embraces. And so, too, does the various parables of Christ, taught throughout the New Testament, support the “infralapsarian” view of predestination, to wit:

“Parable of the Rich Fool” (Luke 12: 15-21)

“Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders” (Luke 6;46-49)

“Parable of the Watchful Steward” (Luke 12:35-40)

“Parable of the Faithful and Wise Servant” (Luke 12:42-48)

“Parable of the Unfruitful Fig Tree” (Luke 13: 6-9)

“Parable of the Sower of Seeds” (Matthew 13: 24-30)

“Parable of the Lost Sheep” (Matthew 18: 12-14)

“Parable of the Great Banquet” (Luke 14: 15-24)

“Parable of the Talents” (Luke 19: 12-27)

“Parable of the Wise and Wicked Servants” (Matthew 24: 45-51)

“Parable of the Ten Virgins” (Matthew 25: 1-13)

“Parable of the Wedding Banquet” (Matthew 22: 1-14)

These parables of our Lord Jesus himself provides our ultimate authority on the subject of “election” and “reprobation.” The Lord himself teaches us in these parables that all human beings have a choice between good and evil, and that they should remain steadfast in persevering in righteousness and good deeds; because the Lord shall come at an unknown hour, or at any moment, to reward the good and to punish the evil. Furthermore, the Reformed Methodists believe that where the Lord’s Prayer says, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” that the “doctrine of assurance” and the “perseverance of the saints” are implicated through this Lord’s Prayer. RMT thus holds that it is possible for the “elect” to fall away, but not to the saints who pray this “Lord’s Prayer” with heartfelt sincerity and desire.



**Discussion Two:           How does Reformed Methodist  
Theology (RMT) assess Dr.  
Clark’s Calvinist view of Creation?**

Reformed Methodist Theology (RMT) embraces the Calvinist theological viewpoint on creation, and finds it to be a trustworthy foundation for understanding Christian theology. It reveals that the power of God is so great that God’s purpose shall be achieved no matter what.

In *Predestination*, Dr. Gordon Clark draws the following inference from the fact that God *created all things*: that *God also controls all things*. While this theological concept of creation is a staple of orthodox Calvinism, it is important to reflect upon the fact that Calvinism has no monopoly over this fundamental theological concept. This proposition regarding creation is also the foundation, too, of natural law and natural justice, because if “God created all things,” his design and plan for creation is His law—eternal and natural.

Therefore, Professor Gordon Clark’s theological description of creation in *Predestination* may be found in many church creeds throughout the ecumenical church community—and certainly it is an appropriate description of creation that is consistent with the Anglican Church doctrine on predestination that is found in Article 17 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.

For Dr. Clark, however, the theological doctrine of supralapsarian predestination (i.e., “limited atonement,” “irresistible grace” and “double predestination”) is largely dependent upon God’s power of creation. “[A] study of predestination can well begin with the doctrine of creation,” he writes. “The reason for this is that all God’s acts reflect his character or nature.”<sup>30</sup> Relying on Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth....” Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” Genesis 2:1: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” The “ALL THINGS” doctrine within Calvinist predestination theology is, in fact, a doctrine of the universal church... This “All Things” doctrine is reaffirmed in the New Testament:

Acts 17:24 “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands....”

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

Ephesians 3:9 “And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ....”

Colosians 1:13-16 “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him....”

Hebrews 3:4 “For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.”

Hebrews 11:3 “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

Again, this theological doctrine that God created “all things” is not a Calvinist doctrine, but it is universally accepted among all sects of the Christian faithful. And so, standing alone and in isolation, Dr. Clark’s proposition that “God created all things” does not prove or disprove Calvinist predestination—Christian theologians in nearly all major denominations hold to the same view of creation. However, only the Calvinists link God’s creation to “limited atonement,” “double predestination,” “irresistible grace,” “doctrine of assurance,” and “assurance of the saints,” and the like.

**Discussion Three:            How does Reformed Methodist  
Theology (RMT) assess Dr.  
Clark’s Calvinist definition of the word “Create”?**

The Reformed Methodist Theology (RMT) also strongly embraces Dr. Clark’s Calvinist definition of the word “create.”

The Calvinist doctrine of predestination adopts the viewpoint that God made all things out of nothing. “God created all things ‘out of’ nothing.”<sup>31</sup> This is “creation ex nihilo” or “fiat creation”—things that only God can do, Dr. Clark explains. Psalm 33:9 says, “He spake, and it was done.” The verb create (BARA) is used in the Old Testament, has two applications (1) original fiat creation; and (2) creation out of substances previously created. Hence, God does both (1) and (2), but Man can only do (2).

As Dr. Clark writes, the power of fiat creation, or creation of something from nothing, implies “omnipotence.” “No man [not even engineers and scientists] can make anything at all, no matter how slight, out of nothing.”<sup>32</sup> This is a law of nature, embraced by the universal church. To be sure, this theological definition of the words “to create” is also not an exclusive Calvinist doctrine. Indeed, it is universally accepted among all sects of the Christian faithful.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

**Discussion Four: How does Reformed Methodist Theology (RMT) assess Dr. Clark's Calvinist view of God's Omniscience, Omnipotence, and Providence?**

Reformed Methodist Theology (RMT) strongly embraces Dr. Gordon Clark's Calvinist theological definitions of God's omniscience, omnipotence and providence, but with certain very important qualifications or restrictions.

Professor Clark's discussion of God's omniscience, omnipotence, and providence—and their significance to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination—deduces that God rules the cosmos with absolute control, including all of the minutest details of occurrences, events, and even human thoughts. Nothing happens outside of God's foreknowledge and control. As Professor Clark writes:

As predestination cannot be understood without an adequate appreciation of God's *omnipotence*, neither can predestination be understood without a realization of God's *omniscience*. The reason is that predestination relates to God's purposes and intentions....

In the previous chapter, where the aim was to show that God created all things, the first step was to indicate that God had created this, and next that, and so on until we exhausted the list and could conclude that God created all things. Here too one could list the items that the Bible says God knows, and finally conclude that he knew all things. This procedure has some advantages. I had a devout and humble aunt, who when a girl had served a term as a missionary to the Mormons.... God, she said, took care of the important things in the world, and even was attending to the work of a young missionary; but God does not know what I am doing in my kitchen, she said, for this is too insignificant for him to notice.... But her Arminian concept of God was far from what the Bible teaches....

But there is a better way to proceed, and the details will fall into place just the same. The procedure will be to show how the doctrine of creation relates to God's knowledge and how omnipresence and providence relate.<sup>33</sup>

But here, Dr. Clark assumes far too much: no Augustinian, no Arminian,

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

no Wesleyan and no Methodist—at least none with church authority—has ever so held that God has *no knowledge of even minor incidents*, such as described by Professor Clark.

The ecumenical conflict between Calvinists and Arminian-Wesleyans ought to stop here with this clarification: the Methodist church does not disagree with the “Calvinist” theological doctrine that God has complete knowledge of all things—whether “major” incidents or “minor” incidents. Indeed, the Arminian-Wesleyan position God’s omniscience and foreknowledge certainly the gospels of Luke 12:7 (Matt. 10:30)<sup>34</sup>, which says that even the hairs of our heads are “numbered” in the mind of God; and in the gospel Matthew 6: 26-30, which says that God clothes the flowers and feeds the birds, to how much more does he care for the so-called “minor” things of human beings. Professor Clark’s statement on the Arminian-Wesleyan position on God’s omniscience<sup>35</sup> is therefore unsubstantiated and disingenuous rhetoric.

But even though God is so great and powerful, and so all-knowing, these divine attributes do not necessarily imply that God controls *human or angelic will* or *human or angelic desire*—God does not force human beings into a loving, covenantal relationship. Indeed, the theme of the Sacred Scriptures is *obedience* to God’s will. Our position on this point is not well received by the Calvinists, but in terms of biblical hermeneutics we join with our orthodox Jewish brothers who are the original interpreters of the Torah and who generally agree with us that God gives all human beings a voluntary “choice” between good and evil.

**1. Calvinist Position on God’s Omniscience and Providence**

God’s Foreknowledge of All Particulars	God’s Control over All Particulars
Yes	Yes

**2. Reformed Methodist Position on God’s Omniscience and Providence**

God’s Foreknowledge of All Particulars	God’s Control over All Particulars
Yes	Yes (but we agree with orthodox Judaism, who are the original keepers and interpreters of Torah,

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p; 43.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

	<p>and who hold that God has given all human beings a “choice” and a “voluntary will”)</p> <p>Yes (but with the exception of human and angelic voluntary wills. God gives them the power to choose between Good and Evil)(St. Augustine of Hippo);</p> <p>Yes (but God gives human beings “Free Grace”)(Rev. John Wesley)</p>
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Professor Clark asks, “How could God exercise providence over all his creations unless he knew it all?” But this is begging the question, without plain references to the Sacred Scriptures, which plainly tell us that God is omniscient. And the Arminian-Wesleyan position has never so held that God does not know all things. Thus, the Arminian-Wesleyan position is in full agreement with this “Calvinist” position on God’s absolute and complete omniscience—this is the position of the universal church.

Professor Clark then addresses two important questions: (1) Is God’s omnipotence (power) contingent upon his omniscience (knowledge)? (2) Or is God’s omniscience (knowledge) dependent upon his omnipotence (power)? In short summary, Professor Clark and the Calvinists answer these two questions in the affirmative. They conclude that God would not be all-knowing if he were not all powerful, and vice versa. Here, the Arminian-Wesleyans agree.

Perhaps the most difficult argument (or theological observation or conclusion) which Dr. Clark makes in *Predestination* is that because God is omnipotent, that he has necessarily denied “free will” or “free grace” to human beings. This, to me, is the most difficult part of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination.<sup>36</sup> Professor Clark and the Calvinists insist that because God has eternal foreknowledge, complete control over, and a purpose for all of his creation,

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<sup>36</sup> As I have shown in the attached essay, “St. Augustine of Hippo on Predestination,” God does create “voluntary wills” in human beings, thus allowing them the power of “choice.” I understand that Dr. Clark’s position that God even “controls” this choice; but the argument remains that God’s omnipotence has not, in and of itself, prevented God from granting human beings the power to chose good from evil.

that all of creation has been “predestinated” according to God’s purpose.<sup>37</sup> Professor Clark thus states: “[f]or the purpose of studying predestination it may not be so necessary to insist on God’s knowledge of the possible as it is to insist on his knowledge of what is or will be actual. The reason is that **predestination has to do with what God intends and purposes**. What he does not purpose cannot come to pass, because the world is made according to the divine omniscience of foreknowledge....”<sup>38</sup> Here, the Arminian-Wesleyans agree with this fundamental description of God’s sovereignty and providence.

Professor Clark and the Calvinists insist that because God has eternal foreknowledge, complete control over, and a purpose for all of his creation, that all of creation has been “predestinated” according to God’s purpose. Professor Clark thus states: “[f]or the purpose of studying predestination it may not be so necessary to insist on God’s knowledge of the possible as it is to insist on his knowledge of what is or will be actual. The reason is that **predestination has to do with what God intends and purposes**. What he does not purpose cannot come to pass, because the world is made according to the divine omniscience of foreknowledge....”<sup>39</sup> Nay, but Professor Clark and the Calvinists go much further and say that God “creates and controls every particular in the world.”<sup>40</sup> This is the very heart of the Calvinist definition of predestination, because “every particular” encompasses even the various decisions which each angel in heaven and which each man on earth makes, including their choices between good and evil. Professor Clark and the Calvinist also say that God neither learns nor forgets things, and that “God is the source of is omniscience. He does not learn from things: his knowledge depends on himself alone and is as eternal as he is.”<sup>41</sup>

Professor Clark also directs us to Stephen Charnock’s *The Existence and Attributes of God*, for “an example of Puritan theology on the subject, and he paraphrases Charnock’s words, as follows:

‘God knows himself because his knowledge with his will is the cause of all other things;... he is the first truth, and therefore is the object of his understanding.... As he is all knowledge so he hath in himself the

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<sup>37</sup> The question of God’s purpose is not simply a sacred question or a Christian question or a theological question—but it is a most fundamental question shared by all of humanity. Indeed, we find the planet earth—God’s creation—and all of its components and subcomponents, including plants, animals, and human beings; and we must ask ourselves the fundamental question, “What is the purpose of this creation?” Here, “purpose” thus means the desire, plan, design, and will of the creator of all creation, who is God.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

most excellent object of knowledge.... No object is so intelligible to God as God is to himself... for his understanding is his essence, himself....

God knows his own decree and will, and therefore must know all future things.... God must know because he willed them... he therefore knoweth them because he knows what he willed. The knowledge of God cannot arise from the things themselves, for then the knowledge of God would have a cause without him.... As God sees things possible in the glass of his own power, so he sees things future in the glass of his own will.’

But we— i.e., Reformed Methodists (who draw from Orthodox Judaism, Arminians, Anglicans, Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics, Methodists, etc.)— all agree with Professor Clark, together with the Calvinists, and hold that God does have the very traits and characteristics as described in Stephen Charnock’s *The Existence and Attributes of God*.

Even if we accept this Calvinist “doctrine on purpose” as true—and most Christians do accept this as true— we still do not have clear proof of “double predestination” or of “irresistible grace.” And we still have no clear proof that God has “purposed” human beings to have no “voluntary will” (St. Augustine)<sup>42</sup> or to have no “free grace” (John Wesley).<sup>43</sup> I believe that St. Thomas Aquinas used the word “eternal law” to describe God’s “purpose” in a theological sense. He then deduced that human beings may ascertain this “purpose” through various means, including “divine law” (i.e., the Sacred Scriptures) and “natural law” (i.e., the study of God’s creations, such as the natural sciences or natural philosophy). But God’s eternal decrees or eternal law is not wholly within the grasp of human understanding, and certainly not without divine revelation; and divine revelation (i.e., the Sacred Scriptures) has not revealed all things to human understanding, and certainly not all things to come in the future. The Calvinist must accept this: “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.” Matthew 24: 36.

And where Professor Clark and the Calvinists argue that God would not be omnipotent or omniscient if he did not already preordain all of the lost souls to everlasting damnation, the Arminians and Wesleyans disagree. For we—the

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<sup>42</sup> See, below, Appendix A, “St. Augustine of Hippo on Predestination,” where St. Augustine argues that God has given all human beings a “voluntary will.”

<sup>43</sup> Rev. John Wesley has argued that God has given all human beings “free grace” or prevenient grace.



Reformed Methodists—agree with St. Augustine of Hippo who says that, even though God has foreknowledge, that he has given human beings a voluntary will, and that even though all men are born reprobate, that they *need not* remain in a state of reprobation.<sup>44</sup> Thus, we Reformed Methodists, unlike the orthodox Calvinists, have a fundamental conception of “grace” that is Augustinian in nature, because it places all men at the centre of God’s purpose, love, and salvation, allowing all men the power to do good and to be good with God’s grace, but also giving all men the freedom to commit to sin—for “free will” is really the freedom to commit self-ruin through self-deception and self-destruction. For so taught Jesus of Nazareth in the various parables regarding the Kingdom of Heaven, to wit:

“The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus” (Luke 16;19-31)

“The Parable of the Rich Fool” (Luke 12: 15-21)

“The Parable of the Sheep and the Goat” (Matthew 25: 31-46)

In these three Parables, Christ teaches us plainly how the sovereignty and providence of God shall be made manifest, in this world and in the next: God’s providence shall lead ultimately to judgment and justice. This has, as the Calvinists claim that it does, nothing to do with the ultimate control over hearts and minds of men, but rather it goes to the wisdom of God. “The sins of men and angels do nothing to impede the ‘great works of the Lord which accomplish His will’” explained St. Augustine in *The City of God*. “For He who by His providence and omnipotence distributes to every one his own portion, is able to make good use not only of the good, but also of the wicked.”<sup>45</sup> The Reformed-Methodist theological position is that there is no need for God to determine human choices or to “harden hearts—as the Calvinists claim—because *God’s wisdom (power (omnipotence), knowledge (omniscience), and purpose (divine providence)*, which surpasses human understanding, is what governs the cosmos.

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<sup>44</sup> See, attached, Exhibit A “St. Augustine of Hippo on Predestination.”

<sup>45</sup> *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Library of America, 1950), p. 476.

### **Discussion Five: How does Reformed Methodist Theology (RMT) assess Dr. Clark's Calvinist view that God Has Predestinated Some Souls To Everlasting Punishment?**

The Reformed Methodist theological position is more nuanced than supralapsarian Calvinist doctrine of “election” or “double-predestination.” The Reformed Methodist theological position on predestination is “infralapsarian,” Augustinian, and embraces the definition of predestination that is found in Article 17 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England.

First, Reformed Methodism holds that God has issued an Eternal Decree has set forth an unchangeable, eternal law: “*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” (Romans 6:21)

Second, this Eternal Decree is unchangeable and governs every human soul, such that both *death* and *eternal life* are possible, for God “will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil....” (Romans 2: 6-9).

Third, that the Early Church, as shown in the works of Augustine of Hippo, support the Reformed-Methodist position that all “reprobates” may elect Christ through God’s grace and be saved. Augustine says: “**For in each individual, as I have already said, there is first of all that which is reprobate, that from which we must begin, but in which we need not necessarily remain; afterwards is that which is well-approved, to which we may abide.**”<sup>46</sup>

Fourth, as set forth in Article 17 of Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, “Predestination to Life is **the everlasting purpose of God**, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath **constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us**, to deliver from curse and damnation **those whom he hath chosen ... they through Grace obey the calling....**” To that, we turn again to the “words of Christ,” who teaches in the “Parable of the Great Wedding” (Matthew 22: 1-14): “For many are called, but few chosen,” referring to Christ’s instruction “as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.” Hence, the Great Commission,

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<sup>46</sup> *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Library of America, 1950), pp. 474-475.

which is to “teach all nations” is without discrimination, and all have been “called.” (Matthew 28:19). But only few have been “chosen.” Thus, to “obey the calling” (Art. 17, 39 Articles) means to put on proverbial “the wedding garment.” (Matthew 22: 12-14). Hence, Reformed Methodism holds to the definition of Predestination as found in Art. 17, 39 Articles of Religion (Church of England), to wit, that Jesus Christ came to save only those who “obey the call.” (See, also, Matt. 22: 1-14).

This is the Eternal Decree of God: only those who “obey the call” shall be saved. This is also the unchangeable human condition, established in covenantal decree, and controlled by God. All human beings are “called” out of reprobation and into a life in Christ (Matt. 22: 1-14); and all human beings have been given a choice. From a Reformed-Methodist theological (RMT) perspective, this is the essence of predestination: all souls proceed, *through voluntary choice* and through their *own volition* of their own will, towards heaven (“with God’s grace”) or towards hell (“with abandoning God’s grace”). This RMT point of view is Augustinian. (See, generally, Exhibit A, “St. Augustine of Hippo on Predestination”).

RMT shares the Calvinist viewpoint that God has foreknowledge of all events and he is omnipotent, and may even guarantee assurance and the perseverance of the saints. For whenever a person, through the grace of God, elects Christ—a power of election that is inherent within every human being—then the graces of assurance and of the perseverance of the saints become possible through prayer and sanctification. But RMT does not share the Calvinist viewpoint that individual human beings lack the power of “choice.”

But where Professor Clark, who speaks on behalf of his Calvinists brothers, break away from our Arminian-Wesleyan viewpoint, is where he asserts that God has “ordained sin” “from eternity in fact,” such that human beings who commit sins “could not have done otherwise”—as if to say, sinners have no choice in the matter.<sup>47</sup> The RMT position does not hold to this theological point of view.

But the Reformed Methodist position is clear: God had ordained, through eternal decree, that the “wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.” Romans 6:23. Eternal law means simply this: the ultimate course of events is Justice (God). God gives human beings a choice between Good and Evil; but simply because God already knows the end from the beginning, does not necessary

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 44-45.

mean that he had not given human beings voluntary wills and freedom of choice. And, again, Augustine himself plainly sides with the Reformed Methodist position. See, Appendix A, “Augustine of Hippo on Predestination: A Primer for Calvinists and Arminian-Wesleyan Theologians.”

**Discussion Six: How does Reformed Methodist Theology (RMT) assess Dr. Clark's Calvinist view that God Has Pre-Determined and Controls Human Will and Choice?**

Reformed Methodist Theology (RMT) looks first and foremost to the words of Christ in the New Testament in rendering any assessment of the words of a human theologian, including those of great Early Church, the Protestant Reformation, the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Great Awakening, or the modern-day Church. Foremost is the "Lord's Prayer" (Matthew 6: 9-15) and the Parables of Christ, such as:

"Parable of the Rich Fool" (Luke 12: 15-21)

"Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders" (Luke 6:46-49)

"Parable of the Watchful Steward" (Luke 12:35-40)

"Parable of the Faithful and Wise Servant" (Luke 12:42-48)

"Parable of the Unfruitful Fig Tree" (Luke 13: 6-9)

"Parable of the Sower of Seeds" (Matthew 13: 24-30)

"Parable of the Lost Sheep" (Matthew 18: 12-14)

"Parable of the Great Banquet" (Luke 14: 15-24)

"Parable of the Talents" (Luke 19: 12-27)

"Parable of the Wise and Wicked Servants" (Matthew 24: 45-51)

"Parable of the Ten Virgins" (Matthew 25: 1-13)

"Parable of the Wedding Banquet" (Matthew 22: 1-14)

Therefore, RMT rejects Dr. Gordon Clark's exegesis and biblical interpretation on God's absolute control over human choice and will.<sup>48</sup> As such, RMT contends that

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<sup>48</sup> These parables of our Lord Jesus himself provides our ultimate authority on the subject of "election" and "reprobation." The Lord himself teaches us in these parables that all human beings have a choice between good and evil, and that they should remain steadfast in persevering in righteousness and good goods, because the Lord shall come at an unknown hour, or at any moment, to reward the good and to punish the evil. Furthermore, the Reformed

the “words of Christ” are superior to John Calvin’s, Theodore Beza’s, Jacobus Arminius’, John Wesley’s, George Whitefield’s, or another theologian’s assertions on human will, human choice, and human ability to choose good and to reject evil.

Dr. Clark’s *Predestination* provides a Calvinistic theological position on God’s control over human will and human choice is supralapsarian. However, the RMT’s Calvinistic position is infralapsarian and Augustinian. Therefore, the chasm between the RMT theological position and that of Dr. Clark’s could not be more distinct than the theology of God’s control over human will and choice.

Dr. Clark and the supralapsarian Calvinist hold that God’s sovereignty and providence are so complete that he alone creates and controls sin, sinners, and reprobates—and that he also condemns them to eternal damnation! For example, Professor Clark writes:

God perhaps knew that Judas would betray Christ, but he did not cause or predestine Judas to do so. He just sat back and let Judas follow his own laws and inclinations. But is this deistic view of divine causality biblical? One must now ask, what limits, if any, does the Bible impose on God’s activity?<sup>49</sup>

At this point, respectfully, Professor Clark uses faulty reasoning. For example, with regards to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., he writes: “If God had not wanted Jerusalem destroyed, he would have prevented it...[and] if God had not wanted sinners to be damned to hell, he would have prevented it. Clearly he wanted them damned to hell,” and so forth.<sup>50</sup> Professor Clark then uses various historical examples and bible passages to make this same fundamental point, where he writes:

Take any example that comes to mind: the destruction of Jerusalem in 588 B.C., the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the sack of Rome in A.D. 410, the wars of Napoleon, Wilhelm II, and Hitler. Had God pleased, these things would not have happened, for God does everything he pleases. At the very least, we must say that God was pleased to let history occur at it has occurred....

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Methodists believe that where the Lord’s Prayer says, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” that the “doctrine of assurance” and the “perseverance of the saints” are implicated through this Lord’s Prayer. RMT thus holds that it is possible for the “elect” to fall away, but not to the saints who pray this “Lord’s Prayer” with heartfelt sincerity and desire.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp. 53-65.

God knows everything. He must, if he is to provide for every beast and creeping thing. He must, if he is to bring to pass the many prophecies recorded. A change of dynasty was needed to enslave the Israelites in Egypt. Judas and Pontius Pilate had to be born in a certain century, and therefore their parents had to marry at a given time; and or this many other conditions had to be satisfied, and these conditions depended on remoter events. The fulfillment of any one prophecy requires control of the whole universe lest something prevent its occurrence....

The world and the course of history were not planned ultimately for them, but for the glory of God. Since this is so, and because of his omnipotence, God doeth according to his will and decree both in heaven and earth; and none can stay his hand.<sup>51</sup>

Professor Clark argues that unless Christians hold this view of God, then they must be deists, because deism holds that God created the world and stepped back to allow the world to run its course without his divine involvement. Hence, according to Dr. Clark, either one believes that God exercises complete controls over the human will, or one must be a deist, an atheist, and the like. But to the Reformed Methodist, this “all or nothing” theological approach is a false choice. Such a drastic theological viewpoint on God’s control over human will is unbiblical—because the Sacred Scriptures hold that the divine decree gives each individual human being a “choice” between good and evil.

Therefore, the Reformed Methodist view and the supralapsarian Calvinist view of how much of human actions God controls are in conflict. The Arminian-Wesleyan conception of human choice has to do with salvation, that God has regenerated in mankind the will and ability to chose life (good) or death (evil). The Calvinists refute this viewpoint. As Professor Clark writes: “[t]he idea that a man can decide what he will do, as Pilate decided what to do with Jesus, without that decision’s being eternally controlled and determined by God makes nonsense of the whole Bible.”<sup>52</sup>

But I agree with Rev. John Wesley’s critical assessment of Calvinist doctrine on God’s absolute and commanding control over human decision-making. Wesley felt that the Calvinists over-emphasized God’s sovereignty and omnipotence at the

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 50-51.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

expense of God’s justice and love. That is to say, Rev. Wesley preached that alongside God’s attributes of Omniscience/Omnipotence are God’s Love and his Justice,— both of which prohibits God from damning souls to eternal damnation who were never given the power to choose good from evil. Moreover, Augustine of Hippo reached the same theological conclusion, i.e., that although all human beings are born in a state of reprobation, they need not remain in that state. See, Appendix A, “Augustine of Hippo on Predestination: A Primer for Calvinists and Arminian-Wesleyan Theologians.”

## CONCLUSION

Reformed Methodist Theology’s position on predestination should be construed from four important pillars upon which its foundation rests:

First, the actual words of Christ (e.g., the Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6: 6-13) and the Parables of Christ) are the primary foundation upon which all other theological interpretations on predestination shall be judged;

Second, the biblical references in Romans Eight and Nine are next in line of importance, together with the entire text of the Sacred Scriptures;

Third, definition of “predestination” that is found in Article 17 off the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England is third in line of importance;

Fourth, the writings of Augustine of Hippo are fourth in line of importance. The reason that Augustine stands alone and above all other theologians is due to his antiquity and great weight of his theology as a Father of the Western Church.

Fifth, the writings of all other theologians—Calvin, Luther, Wesley, Whitefield, and many others, carry equal weight.

The Reformed Methodist Theological (RMT) has thus adopted the “infralapsarian” Calvinist view of predestination. For this reason, the version of “supralapsarian” predestination which Dr Gordon Clark espouses in his book *Predestination* is rejected by RMT as being incompatible with the teachings of the Sacred Scriptures as espoused by the Early Church. Moreover, Dr. Clark’s “supralapsarian” predestination represents a “minority” viewpoint among Reformed theologians. Our conclusion is supported by the plain words of Christ himself who on dozens of occasions defined the nature of the “kingdom of heaven” as being incompatible



with “supralapsarian” theology and philosophy.

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## APPENDIX A

### **St. Augustine of Hippo on Predestination— A Primer for Calvinist and Wesleyan-Arminian Theologians**

by  
**Roderick O. Ford, J.D., D.D., Litt.D.**

The Thirty Nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England embraces a theological doctrine of predestination which focuses on God's eternal purpose that all mankind might accept the covenant of everlasting salvation (i.e. "general or universal atonement," but which only some of mankind—whom God foreknew from the foundations of the world—would actually accept that offer of salvation.<sup>53</sup> God's foreknowledge, however, is "secret to us," so that no mortal human being can know who will, or who will not, attain this everlasting salvation. Mankind's lack of knowledge of those persons whom God has called or elected, reinforces the duty of humility, and being nonjudgmental of the spiritual sanctity of other human beings. Only God's grace is implied in predestination, and not the good works of human beings; such that those human beings who lack the desire, inspiration, and motivation to do good works, or to accept the covenant of everlasting salvation, are

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<sup>53</sup> **CHURCH OF ENGLAND 39 ARTICLES OF RELIGION: Article XVII, "Of Predestination and Election"**

PREDESTINATION to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through Grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.

As the godly consideration of Predestination, and our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal Salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God: So, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.

Furthermore, we must receive God's promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in holy Scripture: and, in our doings, that Will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the Word of God.

tragically doomed to everlasting punishment.

The Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647 also embrace a doctrine of predestination which embrace the theological idea of “limited” atonement, stating those persons—and only those persons—who are predestinated unto Salvation are those whom God hath chosen from the foundation of the world.<sup>54</sup>

When we consider the “mind of God,” we approach incomprehensible infinity and eternity; for in human affairs and events, God knows the end from the beginning, while simultaneously maintaining his omnipotence. Hence, the Calvinist doctrine of predestination is suggested with this conceptualization of God’s Omniscience and Divine Providence. God has perfect foreknowledge and perfect omniscience, as St. Augustine once described this theological concept in *Confessions*, where he says:

I am about to repeat a psalm that I know. Before I begin, my attention encompasses the whole, but once I have begun, as much of it as becomes past while I speak is still stretched out in my memory. The span of my action is divided between my memory, which contains what I have repeated, and my expectation, which contains what I am about to repeat. Yet my attention is continually present with me, and through it what was future is carried over so that it becomes past. The more this is done and repeated, the more the memory is enlarged—and expectations is shortened—until the whole expectation is exhausted. Then the whole action is ended and passed into memory. And what takes place in the entire psalm takes place also in each individual part of it and in each individual syllable. This also holds in even longer action of which that psalm is only a portion. The same holds in the whole of human life, of which all the actions of human beings are parts. The same hold in the whole age of the ‘sons of men,’

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<sup>54</sup> WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH (1647) Chapter X. Of Effectual Calling.

“I. All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, **and those only**, He is pleased in His appointed and accepted time effectually to call,(a) by His Word and Spirit,(b) out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ;(c) enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God,(d) taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh;(e) renewing their wills, and, by His almighty power determining them to that which is good,(f) and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ:(g) yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace.(h)”

of which all human lives are parts....

Surely, if there is a mind that so greatly abounds in knowledge and foreknowledge, to which all things past and future are as well known as one psalm is well known to me, that mind would be an exceeding marvel and altogether astonishing. For whatever is past and whatever is yet to come would be no more concealed from him than the past and future of that psalm were hidden from me when I was chanting it: how much of it had been sung from the beginning and what and how much still remained till the end.

But far be it from you, creator of the universe, and creator of our souls and bodies—far be it from you that you should merely know all things past and future. Far, far more wonderfully, and far more mysteriously you know them. For it is not as the feelings of one singing familiar songs, or hearing a familiar song in which, because of his expectation of words still to come and his remembrance of those that are past, his feelings are varied and his senses are divided. This is not the way that anything happens to you, who are unchangeably eternal, that is, the truly eternal creator of minds. As in the beginning you knew both the heaven and the earth without any change in your knowledge, so you made heaven and earth in their beginnings without any division in your action. Let him who understands this confess to you, and let him who does not understand also confess to you! Exalted as you are, still the humble in heart are your dwelling place! For you lift them who are cast down and they fall not for whom you are the most high.<sup>55</sup>

But because God is omnipotent does not necessary follow that he is unable to create voluntary wills in human beings, while simultaneously maintaining his foreknowledge as to how human beings will exercise their voluntary wills.

Augustine of Hippo says:

But it does not follow that, though there is for God a certain order of all causes, there must therefore be nothing depending on the free exercise of our own wills, for our wills themselves are included in that order of causes which is certain to God, and is embraced by His foreknowledge, for human wills are also causes of human actions; and He who foreknew all the cause of things would certainly among those

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<sup>55</sup> St. Augustine, Confessions, p. 204.

causes not have been ignorant of our wills.<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, at least for Augustine of Hippo, these two ideals—God’s omnipotence and Man’s voluntary will—do not contradict each other. For, as Augustine of Hippo says, in *The City of God*, predestination is an immutable law of eternity, whereby a universal law of sin (reprobation), grace and salvation reigns unchangeable and supreme:

This race we have distributed into two parts, the one consisting of those who live according to man, the other of those who live according to God. And these we also mystically call the two cities, or the two communities of men, of which the one is **predestined** to reign eternally with God, and the other to suffer eternal punishment with the devil. This, however, is their end, and of it we are to speak afterwards.... Of these two first parents of the human race, then, Cain was the first-born, and he belonged to the city of men; after him was born Abel, who belonged to the city of God. For as in the individual the truth of the apostle’s statement is discerned, ‘that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual,’<sup>57</sup> whence it comes to pass that each man, being derived from a condemned stock, is first of all born of Adam evil and carnal, **and becomes good and spiritual only afterwards, when he is grafted into Christ by regeneration**: so was it in the human race as a whole. When these two cities began to run their course by a series of deaths and births, the citizen of this world was the first-born, **and after him the stranger in this world, the citizen of the city of God, predestinated by grace, elected by grace, by grace a stranger below, and by grace a citizen above**. By grace—for so far as regards himself he is sprung from the same mass, all of which is condemned in its origin; but God, like a potter (or this comparison is introduced by the apostle judiciously, and not without thought), **of the same lump made one vessel to honour, another to dishonor**.<sup>58</sup> But first the vessel to dishonor was made, and after it another to honour. **For in each individual**, as I have already said, **there is first of all that which is reprobate**, that from which we must begin, **but in which we need not necessarily remain; afterwards is that which is well-approved, to which we may abide**. Not, indeed, that every wicked

<sup>56</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 154-155.

<sup>57</sup> 1 Corinthians 25:46.

<sup>58</sup> Romans 9:21.

man shall be good, **but that no one will be good who was not first of all wicked; but the sooner any one becomes a good man, the more speedily does he receive this title, and abolish the old name in the new.** Accordingly, it is recorded of Cain that he built a city, but Abel, being a sojourner, built none. For the city of the saints is above, although here below it begets citizens, in whom it sojourns till the time of its reign arrives, when it shall gather together all in the day of the resurrection; and then shall the promised kingdom be given to them, in which they shall reign with their Prince, the King of the ages, time without end.<sup>59</sup>

Augustine of Hippo's thesis on predestination is that all men are born reprobate, "but...we need not necessarily remain" in this state of reprobation.<sup>60</sup> There is in Augustine's theology, then, free choice and voluntary will—but not "free will"; that is to say, there is no free human will that is independent of God's omnipotent will, as is espoused by secular humanism. But, according to Augustine, there is, instead, within each human being a voluntariness of will, or what we may call "voluntary will," whereby they "need not necessarily remain" in a state of reprobation.<sup>61</sup> For in Augustinian theology, there is before every human being the choice between Good and Evil, as Moses presented that choice to Church of Israel in the Old Testament.

Augustine of Hippo expressly rejected "irresistible reprobation" and "irresistible election"—double predestination, because God did not "compel any one to sin."<sup>62</sup> Mankind's power of sin stems from his free choice, which is neither beyond God's foreknowledge and can do nothing to thwart God's sovereign will—as many Calvinists incorrectly assume. In *The City of God*, Augustine of Hippo writes:

**The sins of men and angels do nothing to impede the 'great works of the Lord which accomplish His will.' For He who by His providence and omnipotence distributes to every one his own portion, is able to make good use not only of the good, but also of the wicked.** And thus making a good use of the wicked angel, who, in punishment of his first wicked volition, was doomed to an obduracy that prevents him now from willing any good, why should not God

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<sup>59</sup> *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 478-479.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 476.



have permitted of his first wicked volition, was doomed to an obduracy that prevents him now from willing any good, **why should not God have permitted him to tempt the first man, who had been created upright, that is to say, with a good will?** For he had been so constituted, that if he looked to God for help, man's goodness should defeat the angel's wickedness; **but if by proud self-pleasing he abandoned God,** his Creator and Sustainer, he should be conquered. **If his will remained upright, through leaning on God's help, he should be rewarded; if it became wicked, by forsaking God, he should be punished.** But even this **trusting in God's help could not itself be accomplished without God's help,** although man had it in **his own power to relinquish the benefits of divine grace by pleasing himself.** For as it is not in our power to live in the world without sustaining ourselves by food, while it is in our power to refuse this nourishment and cease to live, as those who kill themselves, **so it was not in man's power, even in Paradise, to live as he ought without God's help; but it was in his power to live wickedly,** though thus he should cut short his happiness, and incur very just punishment. Since, then, God was not ignorant that man would fall, why should He not have suffered him to be tempted by an angel who hated and envied him? It was not, indeed, that He was unaware that he should be conquered, but because **He foresaw that the man's seed, aided by divine grace, this same devil himself should be conquered,** to the greater glory of the saints. All was brought about in such a manner, that neither did any future even escape God's knowledge, **nor did His foreknowledge compel any one to sin,** and so as to demonstrate in the experience of the intelligent creation, human and angelic, how great a difference there is between the private presumption of the creature and the Creator's protection. For who will dare to believe or say that it was not in God's power to prevent both angels and men from sinning? **But God preferred to leave this in their power,** and thus to show both what evil could be wrought by their pride, and what good by His grace.<sup>63</sup>

And men are punished by God for their sins often visibly, always secretly, either in this life or after death, although no man acts rightly save by divine aid; and no man or devil acts unrighteously save by the permission of the divine and most just judgment.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 476- 477.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 711

Thus, Reformed Methodism thus embraces this Augustinian view of divine “omniscience,” divine “omnipotence,” divine “election,” divine “grace,” and “predestination.” Augustine says that God has not compelled “any one to sin.”<sup>65</sup> Hence, the Calvinists have misjudged God’s omnipotence and foreknowledge: God need not “control” man’s choice—for mankind actually has “no free will” but only a “free choice” between good and evil; and mankind’s free choice of evil (i.e., sin) leads only to one inevitable result: death (e.g., suicide) and everlasting punishment. This Reformed-Methodist theological doctrine is not Pelagianism, Arminianism, semi-Augustinianism, or secular “free will.” Like Martin Luther’s *On Bondage of the Will*, the human will is in bondage to sinful living and can do no other; but, with God’s help and grace, that same human will may choose to live righteously.

The Reformed Methodist Theologian must therefore implore modern-day Calvinists to carefully re-consider John Calvin’s Augustinian theology in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, light of Augustine of Hippo’s actual writings in *On Grace and Free Will*, *Confessions* and *The City of God*, to show that “double-predestination” is not a tenable Christian doctrine.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 476.