

**WHITEFIELD COLLEGE & THEOLOGICAL
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THE WHITEFIELD PAPERS

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“Reformed Systematic Theology”

NOTES

on

Rev. John Wesley’s *Predestination Calmly Considered*

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INTRODUCTION

Rev. George Whitefield (1714 – 1770) dwelt among the Methodists but he himself was a Calvinist and an evangelical Anglican priest. His Methodist brothers Rev. John Wesley (1703- 1791) and Rev. Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788) were also evangelical Anglican priests—but the Wesley brothers were Arminian. Accordingly, Whitefield and the Wesley brothers disagreed on various theological points. They had met at Oxford during the early 1700s and each belonged to the same holy club, led by Rev. J. Wesley; they each became co-equal partners and founding fathers of the Great Awakening Movement, which swept across England and America during the mid 1700s; but Rev. J. Wesley and Rev. Whitefield fell out over differences regarding “justifying grace,” and which had grown out from a split from within the Dutch Reformed Church when Jacobus Arminius had begun to challenge certain aspects of Calvinist orthodox theology.¹ See Appendix A, Analogy of Faith- Conflict Within the Ranks of Reformed Clergy (“Wesley v. Whitefield”). Hitherto, the Calvinist-leaning Methodists, led by Whitefield, had worked alongside, and in cooperation with, the Arminian-leaning Methodists, led by John Wesley. Unfortunately, the two Methodist sects never reconciled, although J. Wesley and Whitefield did set aside their differences. In the United States, where religious liberty was championed and enshrined within the state and federal constitutions, it was unnecessary for these two sects to do anything more except co-exist in peace with one another—this was the extent of the conflict between them in America.

This paper explores in detail the Arminian views of the great founder of Methodism John Wesley. It is not presented to be critical of John Calvin, Calvinism or its theology on predestination. Instead, this paper is an essay towards a “Reformed Methodist” theology,² which remediates the theological conflict between Calvinistic Methodists, who were originally led by Rev. George Whitefield (1714 – 1790) and the Arminian Methodists, who were originally led by Rev. John Wesley (1703 – 1791). As such, this paper simply memorializes, and establishes the record, in order that Wesley’s Arminian point of view might be fairly presented to an audience within a Reformed theological seminary, as a matter of important church history.

¹ Wikipedia On-Line Encyclopedia, “Jacobus Arminius,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacobus_Arminius.

² “Reformed Methodist Theology” © and “Reformed Methodism” © were coined by theologian Dr. Roderick O. Ford of the Whitefield Theological Seminary in 2020.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention that this paper is the foundation of my research into the field of the Protestant Reformation, and should be considered the “fifth installment” of “A History of the Anglican Church – Part XXIII (Sections 1 through 4).³ In the first of these installments, I explored the writings of the North African bishop and theologian Augustine of Hippo, who is considered to be a father of the Western Church. In the second and third installments, I covered in depth the theologies, philosophies, and biographies of both Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) and John Calvin (1509- 1564). And, in the fourth installment, I considered the influence of these three theologians upon the English reformers during the early 17th century.

What I omitted in this discussion within my *Apostolate Papers*, because hitherto it had not been historically applicable, was the split within Calvin’s Reformed movement during the 17th Century. That split was caused by the dissenting voice of one its more learned, influential and gifted scholars, Jacobus Arminius (1560 – 1609), who founded a theological doctrine that became known as Arminianism. Arminianism did not become pronounced in England until the middle of the 18th century, when John Wesley (1703- 1791) made it a vital part of the new Methodist movement. Rev. Wesley became the leading advocate and supporter of the Arminian cause, and he took up the mantle of defending it. In Wesley’s *Predestination Calmly Considered*, he picks up where Augustine, Luther, and Calvin have left off, and forcefully argues against certain aspects of Calvinism and in favor of “singular predestination,” “general atonement,” “conditional election,” and “conditional reprobation.”

While the differences between Wesley and Calvin on these theological or soteriological issues could not be more readily apparent, it is more important to note that, with respect to a far more numerous listing of other theological topics, both Wesley and Calvin had more in common and were in perfect agreement on many other aspects of Christian theology, such as:

The divine providence, sovereignty, omniscience, and omnipotence of God

The person of Christ in the Holy Trinity

³ Roderick O. Ford, *The Apostolate Papers, “A History of the Anglican Church- Part XXIII”*, Parts 1 through 4, as follows:

Part 1. St. Augustine’s *On Grace and Free Will*

Part 2. Bro. Martin Luther’s *Theology of Justification and Grace*

Part 3. Bro. John Calvin’s *Institute of the Christian Religion*

Part 4. The English Dissenters of the Early 17th Century: An Introduction

- The nature of the true catholic Church (visible and invisible)
- The nature of the sacraments (i.e., only two: Baptism and Lord’s Supper)
- The origin of Sin and the fall of mankind
- The necessity for grace in salvation
- Salvation by faith alone
- The supremacy of the Sacred Scripture alone

The source of division between the Calvinists and the Armenians lay in subtle differences in the extent to which they wished to reject certain aspects of Roman Catholic liturgical practice, beliefs, and theology. For instance, the Roman Catholic doctrine of salvation included the doctrine of “merit” which retained the doctrine of “free will.” In fact, the Roman Catholic Church promoted human merit in a systematic way. See, e.g., the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “Merit”⁴; “Cardinal Virtues”⁵ “Prudence,”⁶ “Justice,”⁷ “Fortitude,”⁸ and “Temperance”⁹; “Theological Virtues,”¹⁰ “Faith,”¹¹ “Hope,”¹² and “Charity.”¹³ See, Table 1, below:

Table 1. Roman Catholic Church on “Grace, Justification, and Merit”¹⁴

<p>I. Grace</p> <p>II. Justification</p> <p><i>Protestants’ Agree on “Grace and Justification”</i></p>	<p>Human beings’ evil qualities can be overcome through the redemptive power of <i>God’s grace</i>: Human beings need the redemptive power of Christ’s crucifixion and must be truly “born again.”</p>
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⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1995), p. 541.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 495-496,

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 498-503.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

III. Merit

Most Protestant Christians disagree with the doctrine of “Merit”

Next, upon receiving God’s grace, human beings’ evil qualities can be absolved or alleviated through *human merit*: four cardinal virtues; three theological virtues; plus, education, cultivation, moral hygiene, and the pursuit of excellence and moral virtue.

John Calvin rejected this Roman system of “merits,” having thus written: “[i]f any, ***even the minutest, ability were in ourselves, there would also be some merit.*** But to show our utter destitution, he argues that ***we merit nothing***, because we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has prepared; again intimating by these words, ***that all the fruits of good works are originally and immediately from God.***... [The Psalmist, in Psalms 100:3] distinctly excludes us from all share in [our salvation], just as if he had said that not one particle remains to man as a ground of boasting. The whole is of God.”¹⁵ But did Calvin give Psalm 100:3 an “extreme” interpretation? For Psalm 100:3 states, “Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.” Whether explicitly, or through implicit interpretation, it is very hard to draw Calvin’s conclusions out from that passage of scripture. There is nothing in Psalm 100:3 which states that God has not given unto mankind even a “minutest” ability of choice between good and evil. This is one of the reasons why Rev. Wesley criticized the Reformed doctrine on predestination as being “unsupported by Scripture” and as “contrary thereto.”¹⁶ Both Martin Luther and John Calvin, however, must be construed in the light of their times: both men were at warfare against the Roman Catholic government which superimposed upon the Scriptures its own sacred traditions that required the common man to attain his salvation through a battery of ecclesiastical laws—including penance and merits—controlled by priests. John Calvin’s target was this system of merits, and without question in his zeal to undermine that corrupt system, he foreclosed human beings—through his theology on “total depravity” and “complete absence of human merit”—from having “even the minutest” ability choose goodness or to do any good whatsoever.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 258-259.

¹⁶ John Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, ¶ 82.

The Calvinists thus wished to reject altogether the whole Roman Catholic system of “merits.” Thus, for the Calvinists, human beings do not even have the internal ability to choose between good and evil, or to accept Christ as their lord and savior, or to grow in salvation, without God originating, regenerating, and instilling sufficient power and desire to choose good actions. It should be emphasized here that all of the Protestant sects agreed with Calvin’s disdain toward the Roman Catholic system of “merits.” Indeed, that was one of the primary reasons that Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenburg, Germany in 1517. Luther expressly dispelled the theological concept that “works righteousness” could justify human beings, and he coined the phraseology “faith alone justifies.” And so, too, did Wesley and the early Methodists adopt this same view, as had the Church of England. But Calvin’s theology on “total depravity” was distinctive and, perhaps, unnecessary in order for Calvin to achieve the goal of complete reformation of the church. Therefore, I think, that if we excise this part of Calvin’s theology (i.e., “total depravity of mankind”) from his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, we have a masterpiece that is second to none and that is perfect alignment with the other major branches of the Protestant Reformation. As Professor Thorsen writes in *Calvin v. Wesley: Bringing Belief in Line with Practice*,

John Calvin (1509- 64) was undeniably one of the most influential Christian leaders of all time, not just of the Protestant Reformation. Along with Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli, Calvin was one of the towering figures of the spiritual resurgence of Christianity in continental Europe during the sixteenth century. He was a prodigious writer who most notably lived and worked in Geneva, where he gave leadership to the Swiss churches that initiated the Reformed tradition of Protestantism. Following the theological and ecclesiastical leadership of Zwingli and William Farel, Calvin regularly preached and taught in the Genevan churches. He was an apologist for Protestantism, and his writings served to establish the Reformed movement, which separated from the ecclesiastical and political authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Calvin was also polemical, at times, when he considered it necessary to challenge alternate Christian ideas and actions that he considered heretical or a treat to the Reformed understanding of biblical Christianity....

Along with the Institutes, Calvin encouraged people to study the Bible commentaries he wrote. Calvin published exegetical commentaries on almost all of the New Testament and much of the Old Testament. The commentaries helped people study the Bible more in depth as they endeavored to understand Christianity in a post-Roman Catholic, post-Holy Roman Empire context. In addition, Calvin published sermons, created catechisms, and even wrote hymns for the worship and nurture of those in churches. To further serve people, Calvin instituted a place of Christian education, which included a college for the instruction of children and an academie for the advanced education of students. He sent out pastors as missionaries, especially to his home country of France, and oversaw the conistorie (or council), which served as an ecclesiastical court for deciding upon matters of Christian belief, values, and practices, even exercising the authority to censure, excommunicate, and more with regard to those deemed heretical. To these accomplishments, others could easily be added, including the influence Calvin had upon the expanding Protestant movement throughout continental Europe and Britain. Understandably, Calvin never saw the full extent of his influence, since it continues to grow to this day.¹⁷

Protestant Reformer Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) did not hold that mankind was “totally depraved” to the point that it could not hold even a “minutest ability” to choose Christ as lord and savior. We may reach this conclusion about Luther primarily for one reason: Luther expressly adopted the theological conclusions of Augustine of Hippo.¹⁸ For example, in *On the Bondage of the Will*, Luther wrote:

Do you see, friend Erasmus, that by this definition, you (though unwittingly I presume,) betray yourself, and make it manifest that you either know nothing of these things whatever, or that, without any consideration, and in a mere air of contempt, you write upon the subject, not knowing what you say nor whereof you affirm? And as I said before, you say less about, and attribute more to ‘Free-will,’ than all others put together; for you do not describe the whole of ‘Freewill,’ and yet you assign unto it all things. The opinion of the

¹⁷ Don Thorsen, *Calvin v. Wesley: Bringing Belief In Line with Practice* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013), pp. XVII-XVIII.

¹⁸ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (2011 Legacy Publications), p. 25 (“...although Augustine also, whom you pass by, is wholly on my side....”).

Sophists, or at least of the father of them, Peter Lombard, is far more tolerable: he says, “**Free-will’ is the faculty of discerning, and then choosing also good, if with grace, but evil if grace be wanting.**’ He plainly agrees in sentiment with Augustine, that ‘Freewill,’ of its own power, cannot do any thing but fall, nor avail unto any thing but to sin.’ Wherefore Augustine also, Book ii., against Julian, calls ‘Freewill’ ‘under bondage,’ rather than ‘free.’...¹⁹

Here, Luther was very concerned that his friend Desiderius Erasmus (1466 – 1536) had opened the door to “works righteousness” and human “merits,” which were embraced by the Roman Catholic theological system. Luther was also concerned that his other Roman Catholic friends had held to the belief that “free-will” can, “by its own power, without grace, both apply itself unto good, and turn itself from evil.”²⁰ Thus adopting the same view of the great father of the Western Church, Augustine of Hippo, Luther firmly held that there was some element of freedom of choice within human beings. Indeed, the theology of Augustine himself, held that:

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,’²¹ 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

¹⁹ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (2011 Legacy Publications), P. 39.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ 1 Corinthians 25:46.

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.**²² 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 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.²³

And in *On Grace and Free Will*, Augustine concluded that “there is in man a free determination of will for living rightly and acting rightly... the divine testimonies concerning the grace of God, without which we are not able to do any good thing.”²⁴ But it is important to stress, here, that Augustine held that all of our good works come from the hand of God’s grace, quoting the Gospel, saying “ ‘Without me ye can do nothing.’ ”²⁵ In other words, Augustine held firmly that all good Christian service is by God’s grace, and not through individual virtue and merit. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast....”²⁶ For St. Augustine, “the good life is nothing else than God’s grace.”²⁷ And thus so held Martin Luther in *On*

²² Romans 9:21.

²³ St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 478-479.

²⁴ St. Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will* (Louisville, Kentucky: GLH Publishing, 2017), p. 17.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

Bondage of the Will, which Luther himself claimed was based upon Augustine’s viewpoint on the subject of free will.²⁸

Thus, though great Augustine of Hippo had held that though all men were born reprobate—a point which Calvin and Luther both agreed—Augustine also held that all men “need not necessarily remain” in a state of reprobation and “may abide” within the congregation of the elect—a point which Calvin and the Calvinist reformers disagreed. Luther himself seemingly expressed no firm position on this subject and deferred to Augustine’s judgment on the matter; but when Jacobus Arminius (1560- 1609) took up the question of “limited atonement,” he opposed his fellow Calvinist reformers on this particular point, he had essentially re-asserted Augustine of Hippo’s conception of “general atonement” as the biblical standard for salvation. Indeed, Augustine of Hippo had held in *The City of God* that all men, though reprobate, “need not necessarily remain” in a state of reprobation. For this reason, the Reformed Church split into two parts: the Calvinists on one side, and the Arminians on the other side.²⁹

Rev. John Wesley’s *Predestination Calmly Considered* is an Arminian masterpiece. It sets forth, and defends, the proposition that all men, though reprobate, “need not necessarily remain” in a state of reprobation, and “may abide” amongst the congregation of the elect. Wesley wrote this essay in order to set forth all of the biblical references that he could find which supported this position. Hence, this essay was designed to address and to refute the Calvinist position on Predestination, such as various doctrines on “limited atonement,” “unconditional election,” and “unconditional reprobation.” Wesley argues that, alongside God’s attributes of “omnipotence” and “omniscience” is his other very important attributes of “love” and “justice.”

In *Predestination Calmly Considered*, Wesley challenged the Calvinist theology which held that God had created and preordained some human souls for hell and everlasting punishment. Wesley’s fundamental argument here was that God would be unjust, if he predestined human souls to hell, even before they were born. How could God condemn a man who had no chance and no choice in the

²⁸ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (2011 Legacy Publications), p. 25 (“...although Augustine also, whom you pass by, is wholly on my side....”).

²⁹ Hence, Arminius ran into conflict with his Calvinist brothers; a schism within the Reformed Church ensued; and the followers of Arminius became known as the Remonstrants, as his theology on general atonement was later known as Arminianism.

matter of salvation? Why would God bring a human soul before his righteous seat of judgment, if that soul had never been responsible for the actions which it took? Wesley thus argued that a loving, just God could not create human souls and condemn them to hell, even before they are birthed from their mothers' wombs. And he rejected the Calvinist doctrine of "total depravity," contending that there is within every human being "a measure of free will supernaturally restored" and which enables them to choose between good and evil. This "supernaturally-restored free will" did not mean, Wesley argued, that human beings could override or overthrow God's governance, providence, or supreme will; but rather it only allowed all human beings to accept or reject Christ's redemptive salvation.

Due to certain theological problems regarding predestination—to wit, the Sacred Scriptures do not *explicitly* state definitions or explain the word "predestinate" in Romans 8:28-31—there are several important questions regarding "free will," "justification," the "elect," "sanctification," and "reprobation" – neither the Lutherans, the Calvinists or the Armenians can prove with plain text of the Sacred Scriptures that either position is "wholly wrong" or "wholly right." In his book, *Predestination*, the renowned Reformed theologian, philosopher and professor Gordon Clark has said:

The word predestination does not occur in this verse. Neither does the word Trinity occur anywhere in the Bible. Yes the Bible teaches both. No sermon, no confession of faith, no book on theology can restrict itself to the precise wording of the Bible. If the Bible says that Shechem is north of Jerusalem, and if it also says that Beersheba is south of Jerusalem, we can conclude that Beersheba is south of Shechem, even if the Bible does not say so. The Scripture invites us to compare one passage with another and to draw the consequences. With reference to Genesis 1:1, the idea of creation, explained in many later verses, justifies certain conclusion that bear on the doctrine of predestination.³⁰

Thus, the Calvinist and Reformed theologians must admit that their whole doctrine on predestination rests not upon "any one plain scripture," as Rev. Wesley charged in his essay *Predestination Calmly Considered*. The heart of this controversy, perhaps, is best exemplified in Romans 8: 25- 39 and Romans 9:1-33—passages of

³⁰ Gordon H. Clark, *Predestination* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1987), pp. 153-154.

scripture that certainly appear to support the Calvinist view on predestination, to wit:

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. 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. 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. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the chare of God's elect? It is God that justifieth....³¹

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. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. 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. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, why doest he yet find fault? For whof hath resisted his will? 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? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory. Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?³²

Rev. Wesley masterfully addresses this passage of Scripture in *Predestination Calmly Considered*, stating the passage in Romans 8, that all things work together

³¹ Romans 8: 25- 39.

³² Romans 9:1-33.

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.'"³³ 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."³⁴ 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 them which commit such things....³⁵

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....³⁶

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.³⁷

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

³³ Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, ¶ 25.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Romans 2:2.

³⁶ Romans 2:5-11.

³⁷ Romans 4:3.

mercy,' namely, those that truly believe; 'and whom he will,' namely, obstinate unbelievers, he suffers to be 'hardened.'"³⁸

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.'"³⁹ This passage, says Wesley, does not mean that there are men and women who were 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.

Nevertheless, as a practical matter, there is no reason to think that a "justified" Calvinist and (or) a "justified" Lutheran is more holier or more sanctified than a "justified" Wesleyan-Armenian, and vice versa. For, indeed, at the end of their debating, the only point of disagreement turns only on the question of justification: i.e., "how does a Christian become "justified"—through *God's gift of faith alone*, or through human *acceptance of God's gift of faith*?" The Calvinists say, only "God's gift of faith" makes men "justified"; the Lutherans and the Wesleyan-Armenians say, "human acceptance of God's gift of faith" makes men "justified." For example, the Calvinists have no way of actually demonstrating that not even "the minutest ability" to choose Christ exists within human beings; and the Armenians have no way of actually demonstrating that the "ability to choose Christ" has been "supernaturally restored" within each human being. Therefore, when this controversy between Calvinism and Arminianism was brought before the Supreme Court in the Hague during the late sixteenth century, "[t]he Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Reinout van Brederode ... concluded that 'the points of difference between the two professors, mostly relating to the subtle details of doctrine of predestination, were of minor importance and could co-exist... [and] enjoined both gentlemen [i.e., Jacobus Arminius and Franciscus

³⁸ Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, *Ibid*, ¶ 27.

³⁹ *Ibid*, ¶ 28.

Gomarus] to tolerate one another lovingly.”⁴⁰ I have reached, and hereby adopt, the same judgment upon the matter.

In fact, the differences between the Calvinist, the Lutherans, and the Armenians doctrine of free will, salvation, and predestination are minor, in comparison to the vast array of theological doctrines upon which these three sects are in agreement. See, e.g., Table 2. “Calvinism, Lutheranism, and Armenianism: A Comparison” and Table 3. “Calvinism v. Wesleyanism.”

Table 2. “Calvinism, Lutheranism, and Armenianism: A Comparison”

Topic	Calvinism	Lutheranism	Arminianism (Methodist/Wesleyan Theology)
Human will	Total depravity: Humanity possesses "no free will," and not even "the minutest ability of choice"; God does all of the choosing.	Total depravity: But humanity need not remain in a state of reprobation. Humanity possesses "will" that is in "bondage to sin," and which can do no good at all, until or unless it is "transformed" by Jesus Christ alone ("justifying grace").	Humanity is not "Totally depraved" because God has supernaturally restored within it the ability to discern Good and Evil. Prevenient Grace allows human beings to believe in Jesus Christ and to accept him as Lord and Savior
Election	Unconditional election.	Conditional election. Totally depraved human beings need not remain in a state of reprobation	Conditional election in view of foreseen faith or unbelief.
Justification and atonement	Justification by faith alone. Various views regarding the extent of the atonement.	Justification for all men, ^[93] completed at Christ's death and effective through faith alone.	Justification made possible for all through Christ's death, but only completed upon

⁴⁰ [Jacobus Arminius - Wikipedia](#)

			choosing faith in Jesus.
Conversion	Monergistic, through the means of grace, irresistible.	Monergistic, through the means of grace, resistible.	Synergistic, resistible due to the common grace of free will.
Perseverance and apostasy	Perseverance of the saints: the eternally elect in Christ will certainly persevere in faith.	Falling away is possible, but God gives gospel assurance.	Preservation is conditional upon continued faith in Christ; with the possibility of a final apostasy.

Table 3. “Calvinism and Wesleyanism”⁴¹

CALVINISM- “TUPLIP”	WESLEYANISM- “ACURA”
1. Total depravity	1. All are sinful
2. Unconditional election	2. Conditional election
3. Limited Atonement	3. Unlimited atonement
4. Irresistible grace	4. Resistible grace
5. Perseverance of the saints	5. Assurance of salvation

The Great Awakening in England and British North America thus emphasized the evangelical “born-again” regeneration, new birth and conversion experience—under both Calvinist and Wesleyan/Armenian auspices. Rev. Whitefield and the Wesley brothers worked together—Whitefield preached and planted, while the Wesley brothers’ pastoral care held the newly-converted into organized churches. Meanwhile, Rev. Whitefield and Rev. J. Wesley continued to disagree over the doctrine of predestination, but Rev. Wesley assumed leadership over the Methodist movement. It should be noted that Wesley’s love for humanity—a love that sincerely believed that Christ died for all men and women—belief in universal atonement, and superior ministerial administrative skills laid the groundwork for the very successful Methodist societies that flourished during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Calvinistic Methodist societies were in many instances overshadowed by the Wesleyan Methodists, and the Wesleyan Methodists grew larger, even as the Reformed churches tended to recede. I think this is because, as

⁴¹ Don Thorsen, *Calvin vs. Wesley: Bringing Belief in Line with Practice* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013), p.139.

Dr. Don Thorsen has observed in *Calvin vs Wesley: Bringing Belief in Line with Practice*, “Christians live more like Wesley than Calvin.”⁴² Another secret to the success of Methodism is its emphasis on converting the lost souls (unconditional election/ universal atonement); tent and out-door preaching (at least during the 18th and early 19th centuries); emphasis upon holiness; and music (the Methodists are a singing people). And, finally, the Methodist movement was part and parcel of the Church of England and the British empire. Wherever the British (and later, American) flag flew, the Methodist Church settled and flourished. It welcomed the British working classes; it welcomed the Midwestern farmers on the American plains; and it opened its doors to the African slaves who landed upon America’s shores. For these and other reasons, the Wesleyan-Methodist churches grew exponentially. These churches also carried the Armenian banner with them, and this paper provides some insight into the reasons why Armenian theology made sense to them and held their allegiance.

In closing, I would also be remiss if I did not say a word about Judaism and predestination. The Protestant Reformation owes a great debt to Jewish theologians’ interpretation of the *Torah*. In orthodox Judaism, “predestination” is a foreign concept.⁴³ While Jewish theology and tradition does not uphold the doctrine of “free will,” they certainly do embrace the doctrine of “free choice,” that is to say, God gives mankind a “choice” between good and evil, without which the whole theme of the *Torah* could not stand. In Judaism, alongside “free choice” is God’s sovereignty and providence, which prescribes “trust” in an ultimate Justice of all events, amongst the faithful. Hence, we find within orthodox Jewish theology elements of both Calvinist doctrine (“providence”/ “trust”) and Wesleyan/ Armenianism (“free choice”) that may provide a theological unification of both Calvinism and Armenianism.

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⁴² Ibid, pp. XI-XXV.

⁴³ See, e.g., D. T. Lancaster, “The Sequence of Providence,” (May 22, 2019), Beth Immanuel Messianic Synagogue, 828 3rd St. Hudson, Wisconsin. <https://www.bethimmanuel.org/audio/sequence-providence> .

SECTION ONE:

Introduction to Wesley's *Predestination Calmly Considered*

This paper analyzes Rev. John Wesley's landmark essay, "Predestination Calmly Considered," published in a book titled, *The John Wesley Collection: 5 Classic Works* (First Rate Publishers)(printed in the United States on 4 February 2018). This essay has un-numbered pages, but it consists of 90 sections or paragraphs. Therefore, all citations to this work are references to paragraphs (e.g., Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, ¶ 21).

Rather than present the information within this work in the form of a book report or a general commentary, the following discuss in divided into 19 sections or discussion topics. Each discussion topic is designed to analyze several aspects of Wesley's position on any number of theological questions regarding predestination and his opposition to various aspects of Calvinist theological doctrine.

The Biblical references, with few exceptions, were taken directly from the essay and therefore were relied upon by Rev. Wesley himself when expounding upon his various theological positions.

SECTION TWO

DISCUSSION

Discussion 1. Calvinist Doctrine Reconsidered

John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* is a great work of theology and one of the most influential Christian publications throughout the last two millennia. But it has had its share of detractors and critics. For instance, in *Predestination Calmly Considered*, Rev. John Wesley (1703- 1791) founder of Methodism, reviewed and critiqued several sources of Reformed or Calvinist theology, including John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*; "The Protestant Confession of Faith of Paris" (1559); the resolutions of the Dutch Divines (1618); and the resolutions of the Westminster Assembly (1646), all of which, as Rev. Wesley paraphrased them, held:

"That the true grace of God **always works irresistibly** in every believer! That God will finish wherever he has begun this work, so that it is **impossible for any believer to fall from grace!** And, lastly, that the reason why God **gives this to some only and not to others, is, because, of his own will**, without any previous regard either to their faith or works, he **hath absolutely, unconditionally, predestined them to life, before the foundation of the world!**"⁴⁴

God, hath, by positive, **unconditional decree**, chosen some to life and salvation; but not that he hath by any such decree devoted the rest of mankind to destruction.⁴⁵

In other words, the Reformed or Calvinist churches generally argued in favor of irresistible election and irresistible reprobation; and they believed that some men and women were deemed "elect" from the foundations of the world, whereas others were deemed to be irredeemable reprobates. There is nothing human beings can do to change this eternal, divine decree.

In *Predestination Calmly Considered*, Rev. Wesley carefully reconsidered, critiqued, and repudiated these fundamental Calvinist/Reformed beliefs.

⁴⁴ Ibid., ¶¶ 3-7.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Discussion 2. What does it mean to be “Justified by Faith”?

In a word, Rev. Wesley held that the “elect” were those who were “justified by faith.” And those persons who are “justified by faith” are all who believe God (as Abraham believed) and who believe that Christ is their lord and savior.⁴⁶

All Protestants agree that the road to Christian salvation is to be “Justified by Faith,” but where they disagree is precisely how this phenomenon comes about. Does God do this all by himself, or does he invite human beings to participate in this process?

God can do anything, except die or lie; but even God’s inability to die or to tell a lie is not due to his internal deficiencies or limitations, but rather to his eternal and omnipotent nature. God can do anything, but according to the Armenian/ Wesleyan theological system, God chooses not to do everything, even though nothing that occurs is beyond his control. The Reformed/Calvinist theological system, on the other hand, holds that God can do anything and that God *actually does everything*—including selecting those who will be saved and those who will be lost! But the Armenian/ Wesleyan system does not concur with this Calvinist position. The Wesleyans, instead, do not believe that God actually does all of the selection without individual human beings having some choice in the matter. God has invited every human being to the wedding of salvation, but not every human being has accepted that invitation.

Rev. John Wesley observed, for instance, that once a person has accepted the Lord Christ as his or her personal savior—whether he be a Calvinist or an Armenian—the journey to justification and sanctification is a matter of God’s grace, and not due to anything we mortal humans have done. Indeed, at the point when men and women realize that they have been engrafted into the invisible church, and have felt the Holy Spirit warm their hearts, they are bereft of pride and credit in claiming their own salvation. They can only fall humbly to their knees and give thanks to the Almighty. For, as Wesley himself describes this situation:

And the children of God may continually observe how his love leads them on from faith; with what tenderness He watches over their souls; with what care He brings them back if they go astray, and then upholds their going in his path, that their footsteps may not slide. They cannot but observe how unwilling He is to let them go from

⁴⁶ Ibid., ¶¶ 25-29.

serving him; and how, notwithstanding the stubbornness of their wills, and the wildness of their passions, he goes on in his work, conquering and to conquer, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet.⁴⁷

How the newly-born-again Christian comes to Christ is actually a point of agreement between the Armenian/ Wesleyans and the Reformed/ Calvinists:

- a. First, they both agree that “by grace we are saved.”⁴⁸
- b. Second, they both agree that human works play no role whatsoever in earning or deserving that salvation.⁴⁹
- c. Third, Christ’s perfect life and sacrifice on the cross is the sole source of our salvation.⁵⁰
- d. Fourth, “faith alone” in Christ’s redemptive life and sacrifice is means to justification.⁵¹
- e. Fifth, that this “faith” is a gift of God.⁵²
- f. Sixth, this “faith,” which is a gift of God, is what allows human beings to do good works that are pleasing to God.⁵³

Moreover, both the Armenian/ Wesleyans and the Reformed/Calvinists both agree that there are only two Sacraments: (a) baptism and (b) the Lord’s Supper. They reject the Roman Catholic sacraments called: (c) confirmation, (d) holy matrimony (i.e., marriage), (e) holy orders, (f) penance (i.e., confession), and (g) extreme unction (anointing the sick). In addition, there were many other Roman Catholic theological and liturgical doctrines which the Reformers rejected, such as the doctrine of transubstantiation. Thus, when juxtaposed against the Roman Catholic system, the Reformers had more in common than differences.

⁴⁷ John Wesley, “Predestination Calmly Considered,” *The John Wesley Collection: 5 Classic Works (First Rate Publishers)* (reprinted on February 4, 2018 in Columbia, S.C.), ¶ 2.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, ¶ 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

However, the Reformed/ Calvinists differed from the Armenian/ Wesleyans in their answers to certain fundamental questions such as:

- Question # 1: Why do some men and women accept Christ as their Saviour and others do not?
- Question # 2: Does God cause some men and women to sin and others to live righteously?

These two questions have caused the split between the two broad camps of Protestant Reformers—the Calvinists on the one hand and the Lutherans and Armenians on the other. Furthermore, it should be noted that a century before the birth of John Wesley and the invention of Methodism, many English Puritans and Baptists adopted the Armenian theological stereological system. The Armenian system answered these two questions as follows:

- Armenian Answer to Question # 1: God has given to each and every human being an equal choice between Salvation and Eternal Damnation. Therefore, the means to Salvation is human acceptance of Christ's atonement.
- Armenian Answer to Question # 2: God has not caused anyone to sin, but rather He has extended his Grace to everyone. This Grace allows men and women to live righteous and virtuous lives.

But John Calvin and the Dutch Reformers rejected this Armenian approach, instead allocating God's Sovereignty as having much more omnipotent influence upon human affairs. They looked to God's eternal will and to his Sovereignty, and concluded that He alone controls human events, even the most minute thought processes and decisions of human beings. Therefore, the Reformed/ Calvinists system answered these two questions as follows:

- Calvinist Answer to Question # 1: God is Eternal, Omnipotent, and Sovereign. He has predetermined human destiny from eternity, and his foreknowledge, sovereignty and omnipotence have predetermined human events, including the most minute decisions that each and every human being makes.
- Calvinist Answer to Question #2: God has predestined some men and women to reprobation. They were predestined to be a part of the invisible

church or the Elect, and therefore they are predestined to eternal damnation.

It should be pointed out here that both the Reformed/ Calvinists and the Armenian/Wesleyans have relied upon several scriptures—some of which are the same set of scriptures—to prove their theological points, and so their theological differences stem largely from a matter of emphasis, as opposed to content or substance.

This point of this paper is to set forth Rev. John Wesley's defense of the Armenian position, but I shall also discuss the Reformed Calvinist position throughout our discussion.

Discussion 3. Who are the “Elect?”

In a word, Rev. Wesley held that the “elect” were whosoever believes God (as Abraham believed) and believes that Christ is their lord and savior.⁵⁴

Rev. Wesley rejected the Calvinist doctrine of “election” and “reprobation,” meaning those who are “elected” cannot be lost; and those who are “reprobate” cannot be saved; and that, from eternity, God has already determined those who will be the “elect” and who will be deemed “reprobate.” Wesley himself paraphrased the Calvinist doctrine as follows:

Before the foundations of the world were laid, God of his own mere will and pleasure fixed a decree concerning all the children of men why should be born unto the end of the world. This decree was unchangeable with regard to God, and irresistible with regard to man. And herein it was ordained, that one part of mankind should be saved from sin and hell, and all the rest left to perish forever and ever, without help, without hope. That none of these should have that grace which alone could prevent their dwelling with everlasting burnings.⁵⁵

Wesley rejected this Calvinist definition of election, and instead adopted the following definition of election:

I believe it commonly means one of these two things: First, a divine appointment of some particular men, to do some particular work in the world. And this election I believe to be not only personal, but absolute and unconditional. Thus Cyrus was elected to rebuild the temple, and St. Paul, with the twelve, to preach the gospel. But I do not find this to have any necessary connection with eternal happiness. Nay, it is plain it has not: for one who is elected in this sense may yet be lost eternally. ‘Have I not chosen’ (elected) ‘you twelve?’ saith our Lord: ‘yet one of you hath a devil.’ Judas, you see, was elected as well as the rest; yet is his lot with the devil and his angels.⁵⁶

I believe election means, Secondly, a divine appointment of some men to eternal happiness. But I believe this election to be conditional, as

⁵⁴ Ibid., ¶¶ 25-29.

⁵⁵ Ibid., ¶ 14.

⁵⁶ Ibid., ¶ 16.

well as the reprobation opposite thereto. I believe the eternal decree concerning both is expressed in those words: ‘He that believeth [and is baptized] shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.’ [Mark 16:16] And this decree, without doubt, God will not change, and man cannot resist. According to this, all true believers are in Scripture termed elect, as all who continue in unbelief are so long properly reprobates, that is, unapproved of God, and without discernment touching the things of the Spirit...⁵⁷

God calleth true believers, ‘elect from the foundation of the world’.... But unconditional election I cannot believe; not only because I cannot find it in Scripture, but also (to wave all other considerations) because it necessarily implies unconditional reprobation.... But reprobation I can never agree to while I believe the Scripture to be of God; as being utterly irreconcilable to the whole scope and tenor both of the Old and New Testament.⁵⁸

Thus, I interpret Wesley as arguing in favor of a “universal election” of all human beings. This universal election is achieved by means of what Wesley refers to as “prevenient grace.” God’s covenant of salvation is available to every human being who believes. This was the “faith” of Father Abraham.

Secondly, there is the “Elect” who make up all of the persons who actually accept God’s Covenant of Grace, through faith in the blood and resurrection of Christ. This is achieved through the means of “justifying grace” or the grace that comes “by faith alone.”

Thirdly, Wesley believed that there is the “Special Elect” of those persons whom God has called to perform special works throughout history. Examples of such persons are men like Moses, the prophet Isaiah, and the Apostle Paul.

Since the Reformed Calvinists do not uphold the doctrine of “universal election,” they also reject Wesley’s theological doctrine of “prevenient grace.” For the Reformed Calvinists, the only persons who comprise of the “Elect” are those men and women who have actually accepted God’s justifying grace through faith in Christ. Thus, the Reformed Calvinists also only uphold the doctrine of “limited

⁵⁷ Ibid., ¶ 17.

⁵⁸ Ibid., ¶ 18.

election,” meaning that only some men and women were predestined by God to receive his salvation from the eternal foundations of the world.

Discussion 4. Would God save everyone?

Yes, according to Rev. Wesley's biblical analysis and exegesis.

Rev. John Wesley rejected the Calvinist doctrine of “double predestination,” meaning that God predestined some men for eternal damnation and some for everlasting life. Instead, Wesley believed that the *Holy Bible* contained clear support for his argument that God created all human beings with the capacity for accepting his covenantal offer of eternal salvation through belief and faith. Unlike the Reformed Calvinists, Rev. Wesley and many other Reformed Armenians believed in “universal election,” meaning that God wants all men and women to be saved. And in *Predestination Calmly Considered*, Wesley used the following Scriptures to make his point that Christ died for the whole world, and that God would have all men and women to be saved:

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

Here Wesley argues that divine “general revelation”—i.e., natural law—speaks to the human conscience, informing it as to what is right and wrong. This divine revelation is universal and therefore available to every human being

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. (Romans 5:18)

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. (Romans 10:12)

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:3-4)

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (1 Timothy 6:10)

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thessalonians 2:10)

Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. (Matthew 22:9)

And ye said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15)

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. (Luke 19:41-42)

But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. (John 5:34)

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; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us. (Acts 17:24 -27)

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. (James 1:5)

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. (1 John 4:14)

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. (John 1:29)

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:17)

And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. (John 12:47)

For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. (Matthew 18:11)

But if thy brother is grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. (Romans 14:15)

And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died” (1 Corinthians 8:11)

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. (2 Corinthians 5:14)

Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (1 Timothy 2:6)

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. (Hebrews 2:9)

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. (2 Peter 2:1)

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2)

Finally, Wesley relied heavily upon the *Book of Ezekiel* to make his argument that justification and salvation are not irresistible or inevitable, but rather conditional and contingent upon individual acceptance of God's prevenient grace, to wit:

Ezekiel 18:1-32

The Soul That Sins Shall Die

18 1 The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, 2 What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? 3 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. 4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. 5 But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, 6 And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman, 7 And hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; 8 He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man, 9 Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD.

10 If he beget a son that is a robber, [1] a shedder of blood, and that doeth the like to any one of these things, 11 And that doeth not any of those duties, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbour's wife, 12 Hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination, 13 Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood [2] shall be upon him. 14 Now, lo, if he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like, 15 That hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbour's wife, 16 Neither hath oppressed any, hath

not withholden the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment, 17 That hath taken off his hand from the poor, that hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live. 18 As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did that which is not good among his people, lo, even he shall die in his iniquity. 19 Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. 20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

God's Way Is Just

21 But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 22 All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. 23 Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live? 24 But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. 25 Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? 26 When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. 27 Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. 28 Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 29 Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?

30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. 31 Cast away from you all

your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

Discussion 5. Would God unconditionally condemn anyone as being a “reprobate”?

No, according to Rev. Wesley’s biblical analysis and exegesis.

The Calvinist doctrine held that some persons were born unto eternal damnation and beyond God’s eternal salvation, since God himself, from eternity, had already designated them as “reprobate.” But Rev. Wesley rejected this theological concept, and held that even though all men are born reprobate, they need not remain in that state, if they would turn their desires toward Christ and believe. For Rev. Wesley this human capacity to accept Christ’s redemptive salvation was clearly displayed in the following scriptures:

“Know that the Lord thy God, he is the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him to their face so destroy them. Wherefore, if ye harken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant which he sware unto thy fathers.” (Deuteronomy 7:9, 12)

“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God; and a curse, if you will not obey.” (Deuteronomy 11:26, 27, 28)

“See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, and the Lord thy God shall bless thee. But if thou wilt not hear, I denounce unto you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, chose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” (Deuteronomy 30:15)

And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah, and he said, The Lord is with you while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him he will forsake you. (2 Chronicles 15:1, 2).

And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this.... (Ezra 9:13)

“Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any: he is mighty in strength and wisdom...” (Job 36:5)

“The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.” (Psalm 145:9)

“When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.” (Proverbs 1:27)

“I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts;...” (Isaiah 65:2)

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” (Ezekiel 18:20)

“And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:...” (Matthew 7:26)

“Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:...” (Matthew 11:20)

“The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.” (Matthew 12:41)

“He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.” (Matthew 13: 11, 12)

“Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.” (Matthew 22:8)

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19)

“How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” (John 5:44)

“But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.” (Acts 8:20)

“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:...” (Romans 1:20)

“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” (2 Thessalonians 2:10)

“Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.” (Matthew 22:9)

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15)

“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,...” (Luke 19:41)

“But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.” (John 5:34)

“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;...” (Acts 17:24)

“Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” (Romans 5:18)

“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.” (Romans 10:12)

“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth....” (1 Timothy 2: 3, 4)

“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows....” (1 Timothy 6:10)

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” (James 1:5)

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” (1 John 4:14)

“For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” (Matthew 18:11)

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1: 29)

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” (John 3:17)

“And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” (John 12:47)

“But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.” (Romans 14:15)

“And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?” (1 Corinthians 8:11)

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:...” (2 Corinthians 5:14)

“Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (1 Timothy 2:6)

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” (Hebrews 2:9)

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.” (2 Peter 2:1)

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 John 2:1-2)

Rev. Wesley believed that God’s attributes of “Love” and “Justice” prohibited Him from creating human beings to be incorrigible reprobates. For Wesley, God did not design some men and women to carry out sin in order for God to present his authority and power, or to fulfill his purpose. Where, for example, the Calvinists argue that some men and women are “reprobate,” they mean that Christ rejected them from the foundation of the world—meaning that a person who is a “reprobate” in Calvinist theology was someone who was “beyond the pale,” i.e., persons whom God himself had already condemned to hell, even before they were born.

On-line Definition of “Reprobate”:	1. An unprincipled person (often used humorously or affectionately). "he had to present himself as more of a lovable reprobate than a spirit of corruption" Similar: rogue, rascal, scoundrel, good-for-nothing, villain, wretch, unprincipled person, Rake, profligate, degenerate, debauchee
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	<p>Libertine, troublemaker, mischief-maker Wrongdoer, evil-doer, transgressor, sinner Roué, vaurien, scallywag, bad egg, scofflaw Hellion, ne'er-do-well, miscreant, blackguard Knave, rapsallion, varlet, wastrel, rakehell Scapegrace</p> <p>2. ARCHAIC (in Calvinism) a sinner who is not of the elect and is predestined to damnation.</p>
<p>Armenian or Wesleyan Christian Theology on the definition of “Reprobate.”⁵⁹</p>	<p>“Reprobation, in Christian theology, is a doctrine of the Bible found in many passages of scripture such as Romans 1:20-28, Proverbs 1:23-33, John 12:37-41, Hebrews 6:4-8 etc. which teaches that a person can reject the gospel to a point where God in turn rejects them and curses their conscience to sin.’</p> <p>“When a sinner is so hardened as to feel no remorse or misgiving of conscience, it is considered a sign of reprobation. This isn’t teaching that because of their wicked actions that God will not save them, but that God has withdrawn his offer of salvation and he gives them over to a seared conscience and now they can do vile actions. The vile actions and the many different things are evidence of a reprobate mind.”</p>
<p>Calvinist Theology: Canons of Dordrecht, First Head (Chapter 1) Article 15⁶⁰</p>	<p>“Moreover, Holy Scripture most especially highlights this eternal and undeserved grace of our election and brings it out more clearly for us, in that it further bears witness that not all people have been chosen but that some have not been chosen or have been passed by in God's eternal election-- those, that is, concerning whom God, on the basis of his entirely free, most just, irreproachable, and unchangeable good pleasure, made the</p>

⁵⁹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reprobation>

⁶⁰ Ibid.

	<p>following decision: to leave them in the common misery into which, by their own fault, they have plunged themselves; not to grant them saving faith and the grace of conversion; but finally to condemn and eternally punish them (having been left in their own ways and under his just judgment), not only for their unbelief but also for all their other sins, in order to display his justice. And this is the decision of reprobation, which does not at all make God the author of sin, but rather its fearful, irreproachable, just judge and avenger.”</p>
<p>Calvinist Theology: Lorraine Boettner, <i>The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination</i> (Eerdmans, 1932)⁶¹</p>	<p>“The doctrine of absolute Predestination of course logically holds that some are foreordained to death as truly as others are foreordained to life. The very terms “elect” and “election” imply the terms “non-elect” and “reprobation.” When some are chosen out others are left not chosen. The high privileges and glorious destiny of the former are not shared with the latter. This, too, is of God. We believe that from all eternity God has intended to leave some of Adam’s posterity in their sins, and that the decisive factor in the life of each is to be found only in God’s will. As Mozley has said, the whole race after the fall was “one mass of perdition,” and “it pleased God of His sovereign mercy to rescue some and to leave others where they were; to raise some to glory, giving them such grace as necessarily qualified them for it, and abandon the rest, from whom He withheld such grace, to eternal punishment.” In all of the Reformed creeds in which the doctrine of reprobation is dealt with at all it is treated as an essential part of the doctrine of predestination. The Westminster Confession, after stating the doctrine of election, adds: “The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the inscrutable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory</p>

⁶¹ Ibid.

	of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.”
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Men and women are not born “reprobate” but that they might become “reprobate” over the course of time.

Romans 1:20-28:

²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

²¹ Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

²³ And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

²⁴ Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

²⁵ Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

²⁶ For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

²⁷ And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient....

Proverbs 1:23-33:

²³ Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

²⁴ Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

²⁵ But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:

²⁶ I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

²⁷ When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

²⁸ Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

²⁹ For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

³⁰ They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.

³¹ Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

³² For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

³³ But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

John 12:37-41:

³⁷ But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

³⁸ That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

³⁹ Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

⁴⁰ He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

⁴¹ These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

Hebrews 6:4-8:

⁶ Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

⁷ Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

⁸ For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

⁹ There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

¹⁰ For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

¹¹ Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

¹² For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and

spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Discussion 6. May the “Elect” fall from Grace?

Yes, according to Rev. Wesley’s biblical analysis and exegesis.

Rev. Wesley held that there were two types of “justified” Christians: those who “draw back” and those who “persevere.” “Yet thus much I allow: Two sorts of believers are in the next verse mentioned; some that draw back, and some that persevere. And I allow, the Apostle adds, ‘We are not of them who draw back unto perdition.’”

Here, Rev. Wesley cites Hebrews 10:38 (“The just shall live by faith: But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”). The phrase “draw back,” implies that the person has once “lived by faith” but drew back to perdition. “For thus saith the Apostle Peter, ‘If, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,’ (the only possible way of escaping them,) ‘they are entangled again therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.’ (2 Peter 2:20).” And “[f]or thus saith the writer to the Hebrews: ‘It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.’” (Hebrews 6:4-6). Also, the text in Habakkuk 2:4 (“Behold, *his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him*: but the just shall live by faith”); Wesley states that the phrase “his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him” means, when translated for the original Greek, “‘If a man draw back, my soul hath not pleasure in him.’” In other words: Habakkuk 2:4 may be translated thus: “*If a man draw back, my soul hath no pleasure in him. But the just shall live by my faith.*” Here, “my faith” is translated to mean, “faith in me.” And, again, in Matthew 5:13, Rev. Wesley finds in the words “salt” and “lost is savor,” support for his conclusion that the saved might fall from grace.

Another example that Rev. Wesley relies upon is John 15:1 (“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. I am the vine, ye are the branches. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”) With Christ as the “Vine,” and with humans as the “Branches,” it is thus clear here that all of the Branches are either (a) (all human beings whom God had created) or (b) (all human beings who are members of Christ’s body, the Church). In either case, the Branches not bearing fruit are taken

away, cast off from the vine, and withers. Thus, Rev. Wesley concludes: “Those who are branches of Christ, the true vine, may yet finally fall from grace.” On this very point, Rev. Wesley thus continues:

Those who are grafted into the good olive tree, the spiritual, invisible Church, may nevertheless finally fall. For thus saith the Apostle: ‘Some of the branches are broken off, and thou art grafted in among them, and with them partakes of the root and fatness of the olive tree. Be not high-minded, but fear: If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee. Behold the goodness and severity of God! On them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: Otherwise thou shalt be cut off.’ (Romans 11:17, etc).⁶²

We may observe here, (1) The persons spoken to were actually ingrafted into the olive tree. (2) This olive tree is not barely the outward, visible Church, but the invisible, consisting of holy believers. So the text: ‘If the first fruit be holy, the lump is holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches.’ (3) Those holy believers were still liable to be cut off from the invisible Church, into which they were then grafted.... It remains, then, that those who are grafted into the spiritual, invisible Church, may nevertheless finally fall.⁶³

Furthermore, the theological concept of temptation, which runs throughout the New Testament, presupposes that the elect may fall from grace. For instance, Jesus was himself tempted in the desert by Satan (Matthew 4:1-11) (“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil....”).

In other part of the same Gospel, Jesus told his disciples, “What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matthew 26: 40-41). And in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus said, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” (Luke 22: 31-32), And the Apostle Paul says:

⁶² Ibid., ¶ 71.

⁶³ Ibid.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Whereunto take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. (Ephesians 6: 11-18)

Hence, the whole Christian theology on temptation presupposes “choice” and a power of resistance to temptation, within the elect, whereby prayer is the medium through which the faithful receive the aid and the support from the Holy Spirit. Of course, this does not directly refute Calvin’s idea of “irresistible grace,” but it certainly does refute the Calvinist presupposition that human beings play no role the actual choice that culminates in “belief” that is that “faith of Abraham,” which was counted unto him for righteousness (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3)

Discussion 7. What is the “Sovereignty” of God?

The next problem which Wesley addressed was the Calvinist theological idea of God’s sovereignty.

The Calvinist position is that because God is absolutely sovereign, that he must absolutely control human choice between good and evil—that as Creator he must also control all occurrences and human events, since he alone is the First Cause of everything that has transpired since the beginning of time.

Hence, the Calvinists hold, in so many words, that God must therefore also control human choice; if a man choose Christ, it is because God caused him to do so; and if a man chooses evil, it is because God cause him to choose evil. But the traditional Catholic ideal of God’s sovereignty, which Rev. Wesley embraced, did not hold such a strict view of God’s sovereignty.

The Roman Catholics held that 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. For example, 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 causes not have been ignorant of our wills.⁶⁴

Therefore, at least for Augustine of Hippo, these two ideals—God’s omnipotence and Man’s voluntary will—do not contradict each other. This is the view that was adopted by the Armenians, Rev. Wesley, and the Church of England.

Furthermore, Rev. Wesley explained that God would be “unjust” if he did not allot some moral responsibility to individual human beings before punishing them to everlasting damnation. God’s major attribute is that, in addition to his omniscience and omnipotence, he is “just.” “The sovereignty of God,” writes Rev. Wesley, “is then never to be brought to supersede his justice. And this is the

⁶⁴ St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 154-155.

present objection against unconditional reprobation: (the plain consequence of unconditional election)...”⁶⁵ Rev. Wesley thus explores the injustice of condemning a man who is not at all responsible for his own actions:

If then God be just, there cannot, on your scheme, be any judgment to come....⁶⁶

You say, The reprobates cannot but do evil; and that the elect, from the day of God’s power, cannot but continue in well-doing. You suppose all this is unchangeably decreed; in consequence whereof, God acts irresistibly on the one, and Satan on the other. Then it is impossible for either one of the other to help acting as they do; or rather, to help being acted upon, in the manner wherein they are. For if we speak properly, neither the one nor the other can be said to act at all. Can a stone be said to act, when it is thrown out of a sling? Or a ball, when it is projected from a cannon? No more can a man be said to act, if he be only moved by a force he cannot resist. But if the case be thus, you leave no room either for reward or punishment. Shall the stone be thus, you leave no room either for reward or punishment. Shall the stone be rewarded for rising from the sling, or punished for falling down? Shall the cannon-ball be rewarded for flying towards the sun, or punished for receding from it? As incapable of either punishment or reward is the man who is supposed to be impelled by a force he cannot resist. Justice can have no place in rewarding or punishing mere machines, driven to and fro by an external force. So that your supposition of God’s ordaining from eternity whatsoever should be done to that end of the world; as well as that of God’s acting irresistibly in the elect, and Satan’s acting irresistibly in the reprobates; utterly overthrows the Scripture doctrine of rewards and punishments, as well as of a judgment to come.⁶⁷

For Wesley, the scriptural scheme of justice can be found in Matthew 25:31-46.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, ¶ 31.

⁶⁶ Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, ¶ 37.

⁶⁷ Wesley, *Predestination Calmly considered*, ¶ 38.

⁶⁸ Wesley, *Predestination Calmly considered*, ¶ 32.

Discussion 8. What is the “Love” of God?

In a word, Rev. Wesley held that the “love” of God is his “mercy, truth, and justice.”⁶⁹

Rev. Wesley argues that God’s sovereignty—his omniscience and omnipotence—work in tandem with God’s love. This is a major component to Wesley’s theological system, and constitutes a major reason for why he rejected Calvinist “double” predestination.

The love of God is revealed through his “mercy.” For one thing, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16).

Here, then, is a merciful way out for the reprobate: *believe in Jesus*. This is God’s love for all mankind. As Rev. Wesley says, “that not sovereignty alone, but justice, mercy, and truth hold the reins.”⁷⁰ And “[t]he glory of his justice is this, to ‘reward every man according to his works.’ Hereby is that glorious attribute shown, evidently set forth before men and angels, in that it is accepted of every man according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not. This is that just decree which cannot pass, either in time or in eternity.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ Ibid., ¶ 54.

⁷⁰ Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, ¶ 53.

⁷¹ Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, ¶ 52.

Discussion 9.

What is the “Justice” of God?

Under Calvin’s theological system of irresistible grace, of unconditional reprobation, and unconditional election, God’s eternal decree has already predetermined the outcome of all events and occurrences. But Wesley held that this theological system was unjust and does not reflect the “justice” of God, because “if man be capable of choosing good or evil, then he is a proper object of the justice of God, acquitting or condemning, rewarding or punishing. But otherwise he is not. A machine is not capable of being either acquitted or condemned. Justice cannot punish a stone for falling to the ground; nor, on [Calvin’s scheme], a man for falling into sin.”

For Rev. Wesley, “[t]he glory of his justice is this, to ‘reward every man according to his works.’ Hereby is that glorious attribute shown, evidently set forth before men and angels, in that it is accepted of every man according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not. This is that just decree which cannot pass, either in time or in eternity.”⁷²

Rev. Wesley does not accept the Calvinist belief that the persons of Pharaoh and Esau, in the Old Testament, show that God created those person to perform evil works and that, therefore, they were irresistibly reprobate personalities.⁷³ In the case of Pharaoh, God’s purpose would have been achieved either way, whether Pharaoh had changed his mind and willingly let the Children of Israel go; or whether his heart remained hardened. After several plagues, when Pharaoh refused to emancipate the Israelites, God simply gave him up to a reprobate mind and heart, thus hardening Pharaoh’s heart so as to permit God himself to liberate the Israelites with a heavy hand. Thus, God does justice, not by punishing those whom he eternally decreed to be reprobate, but by giving those person who refuse to repent up to a reprobate mind and heart, thus allowing Satan have dominion over such persons.

Likewise, in the case of Esau, Rev. Wesley points out the God did not eternally punish Esau, even though he traded his birthright to his brother Jacob for bowl of pottage. Esau became wroth towards Jacob, and pursued him in anger, apparently with the intention to murder Jacob. But those brothers were reconciled, and Esau had a change of heart, and embraced his brother Jacob “and fell on his

⁷² Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, ¶ 52.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, ¶ 55.

neck and kissed him.”⁷⁴ This reconciliation suggest, a Rev. Wesley points out, that Esau might not have been lost. “[T]here is great reason,” writes Wesley, “that Esau (as well as Jacob) is now in Abraham’s bosom.”⁷⁵ Hence, the notion that “God loved Jacob but hated Esau” does not show that God created one for everlasting salvation and the other for everlasting damnation.

God’s justice then is perfect only to the extent that His divine decree is eternal and unchangeable: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:16).

The justice of God is therefore displayed by his mercy. See, also, Discussions 7 and 8.

⁷⁴ Ibid., ¶ 56.

⁷⁵ Ibid., ¶ 56.

Discussion 10. What is the “Wisdom” of God?

Rev. Wesley offers his own insights into this question, contending that God’s eternal plan is, through wisdom, to offer salvation to men through their own choice.

He instructs them in various ways, through the education of his general revelation in nature, through reason, and through divine fiat, divine law, and the Sacred Scriptures.

The whole design, says Rev. Wesley, is “that men should be saved, not as trees or stones, but as men, as reasonable creatures, endued with understanding to discern what is good, and liberty either to accept or refuse it...”⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Ibid., ¶ 51.

Discussion 11. Does the Sovereignty of God foreclose Human Choice?

No. According to Rev. Wesley, God does not foreclose human choice.

If men did not have choice, then there would be no grounds for punishing anyone for doing evil, or rewarding anyone for doing good. The whole objective—as exemplified in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25: 31-46)-- in the New Testament would be frustrated:

The Sheep and the Goats

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

⁴⁴ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

⁴⁵ “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

⁴⁶ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

But, as Rev. Wesley points out, such a judgment would be utterly unjust if human beings had no choice between good and evil. As Rev. Wesley points out in *Predestination Calmly Considered*:

But if every man be unalterably consigned to heaven or hell before his comes from his mother’s womb, where is the wisdom of this; of dealing with him, in every respect, as if he were free, when it is no such thing? What avails, what can this whole dispensation of God avail a reprobate? What are promises or threats, expostulations or reproofs to thee, thou firebrand of hell? What, indeed, (O my brethren, suffer me to speak, for I am full of the matter!) but empty farce, but mere grimace, sounding words, that mean just nothing?⁷⁷ Without human choice, what need of divine warning, since the reprobate—like trees and rocks—cannot repent or do otherwise than to live in sin? But, to the contrary, God has instilled within all men sufficient wisdom to accept or reject his eternal salvation.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Ibid., ¶ 51.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Discussion 12. Does the “Justice” and “Love” of God compliment His “Sovereignty”?

Yes. Rev. Wesley is correct when asserting the God’s sovereignty does not exist in a vacuum separate and apart from God’s love and justice.

The Calvinist conception of God’s sovereignty has been said to preempt free will or human choice. But the Wesleyan or Armenian view holds that God’s other attributes—Love, Mercy, Truth, and Justice—requires that human beings have some degree of freedom and choice.

In other words, God’s justice is premised upon allowing each and every human being sufficient ability to do good and to choose righteousness. God’s love prohibits injustice.

And since all that God made was good, the Armenians hold that it does not follow that God created some human beings to be unchangeable reprobates. God’s sovereignty does not foreclose his arrogation to individual human beings sufficient voluntariness of will to accept to reject His plan of salvation.

As Rev. Wesley says: “[b]ut in disposing the eternal states of men, (allowing only what was observed under the first article,) it is clear, that not sovereignty alone, but justice, mercy, and truth hold the reins.”⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Ibid., ¶ 54.

Discussion 13. Does the “Justice” and “Love” of God permit Him to Create “Reprobate” Humans Beings who are Predestinated for Eternal Punishment?

No. According to Rev. Wesley, God’s essential attributes of “love” and “justice” are inconsistent with the doctrine of unconditional reprobation or “double predestination.”

The Calvinist conception of “reprobate” assert that some men and women were selected by God, before they were born, to serve Satan and to suffer eternal damnation.

But the Wesleyan or Armenian view holds that God’s other attributes—Love and Justice—requires that human beings have some degree of freedom and choice. In other words, God’s justice is premised upon allowing each and every human being sufficient ability to do good and to choose righteousness.

God’s love prohibits injustice. And since all that God made was good, the Armenians hold that it does not follow that God created some human beings to be unchangeable reprobates. God’s sovereignty does not foreclose his arrogation to individual human beings sufficient voluntariness of will to accept to reject His plan of salvation.

As Rev. Wesley concludes, God would be utterly unjust in punishing a reprobate who had no choice in whether to accept or reject Christ. The “glory of his justice,” writes Rev. Wesley, “is this, to ‘reward every man according to his works.’”⁸⁰ And God’s love is to grant mercy, because “[t]he LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.” (Psalm 145:9).

⁸⁰ Ibid., ¶ 52.

Discussion 14. Does God permit “Free Will” in Human Beings?

Yes, but free will is restricted. According to Rev. Wesley, God has supernaturally restored mankind’s ability to have faith and believe in God.

Rev. Wesley was called upon to address the charge that he was a Pelagian, or a believer in Pelagianism, a doctrine that maintains that human beings have free will in that they have within themselves the power to choose salvation (good) or eternal damnation (evil), and they may work out their salvation by performing good deeds and works here on earth.

The Calvinist charged that unless Wesley and other Armenians accepted their view of irresistible election and reprobation, then they must necessarily be Pelagians. This argument, Wesley rejected, and embraced the doctrine that there is within every human being “a measure of free will supernaturally restored” and which enables them to choose between Good and Evil.

Wesley maintained that there is “natural free will” in human beings, which almost no philosophers or theologians denied. But, “in moral things,” Wesley did not “carry free-will so far” as to embrace the idea that human beings could attain salvation without God’s saving (prevenient and justifying) grace. But Wesley maintained that all human beings have the ability of choice, which he described as “a measure of free will supernaturally restored to every man, together with that supernatural light which ‘enlightens every man that cometh into the world.’”⁸¹ For Wesley, it mattered little as to whether this supernaturally-restored light in every human being be also described as “natural human reason” or “divine general revelation.” Either way, God is the First Cause, and so it cannot be said that God is robbed of all glory where human beings are given “a measure of free will supernaturally restored.”⁸²

Both Augustine and Luther reached the same conclusion as Wesley. In *The City of God*, Augustine held that human beings have “voluntary wills”; and, in *On Grace and Free Will*, Augustine opined that human beings could not come to Christ, without divine grace. Similarly, in Luther’s *On Bondage of Will*, he held that, in supernatural and moral things, there is no free will—only sin and death—unless a man chooses Christ redemptive salvation. It should be noted here that many Calvinists claim that Calvinist soteriology does not conflict with Augustinian

⁸¹ Ibid., ¶ 45.

⁸² Ibid., ¶ 45.

and Lutheran soteriology, but if this is true, then the Wesleyan-Arminians and Calvinists must be arguing over semantics.

Discussion 15. Is Human “Free Will” necessary in order for God to justly judge Human Beings?

Yes. According to Rev. Wesley, God could not condemn a human soul to everlasting punishment, unless he or she had free will or some degree of personal choice and responsibility.

As God’s creation is good and very good, then so must all human beings be good. God as sovereign creator established only perfection and goodness—and voluntary will within the lower angels. For it was the angelic turning away from God that created the breach—the invention of “sin”; and it was Adam’s and Eve’s voluntary fall from eternal grace that led to “sin.” For, indeed, it is “sin,” or man’s voluntary selection of unlawfulness, that God shall judge. As human beings are not irrational animals, trees, or rocks, they have special moral capacity to choose between Good and Evil. That choice is God’s eternal, unchangeable decree—to choose evil is to accept eternal damnation and punishment. Rev. Wesley embraced the doctrine that there is within every human being “a measure of free will supernaturally restored” and which enables them to choose between Good and Evil. This “choice” is what will ultimately be judged at the last Judgment. It must therefore necessarily follow that human “free will” is necessary precondition of God’s judgment.

The justice of God is therefore displayed by his mercy, and this mercy presupposes individual moral guilt and responsibility. See, also, Discussions 7, 8 and 9.

Discussion 16. Does God work “irresistibly” in Human Beings?

Yes and No. Rev. Wesley did not deny the possibility that God used certain men and women to perform special works—and so God does work irresistibly upon some human souls. However, God does not work irresistibly in making certain human souls reprobate and thus condemning them to everlasting punishment.

The Calvinist, on the other hand, hold that the elect have received “irresistible grace” that prevents them from falling away from God. But Rev. Wesley rejected this theological concept, holding that no place in Scripture can this doctrine be proven or exemplified.⁸³

Rev. Wesley grants that for some men, who are specially called, may be irresistibly called to perform certain works; but that eternal salvation is not conditioned upon the doctrine of irresistible election.⁸⁴

In a word, Rev. Wesley held, contrary to Calvinism, that God does not work irresistibly in human beings. For one thing, Wesley believed that the elect were subject to temptation and might fall from grace; and, since this was their predicament, it was necessary for the elect to remain vigilant and to guard against temptation. In his *Predestination Calmly Considered*, Wesley especially criticized Calvinism on this point, stating:

But, indeed, when you talk all of its ‘making men love God,’ you know not what you do. You lead men into more danger than you are aware o. You almost unavoidably lead them into resting on that opinion; you cut them off from a true dependence on the fountain of living waters, and strengthen them in hewing to themselves broker cisterns, which can hold no water. This is my grand objection to the doctrine of reprobation, or (which is the same) unconditional election. That it is an error, I know; because, if this were true, the whole Scripture must be false. But it is not only for this—because it is an error—that I so earnestly oppose it, but because it is an error of so pernicious consequence to the souls of men; because it directly and naturally tends to hinder the inward work of God in every stage of it...⁸⁵

⁸³ Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, ¶¶ 81, 82.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. ¶¶ 85, 86

The observing these melancholy examples day by day, this dreadful havoc which the devil make of souls, especially of those who had begun to run well by means of this anti-scriptural doctrine, constrains me to oppose it from the same principles whereon I labor to save souls from destruction.... The doctrine of absolute predestination naturally leads to the chambers of death.⁸⁶

In other words, Rev. Wesley felt that the Calvinist doctrine of “irresistible grace” prohibited Christians from growing in sanctifying grace.

The Calvinists, to be sure, do not take the same negative view of the doctrine of irresistible grace, holding that it tends to make human beings more holy, giving them confidence and divine assurance of God’s salvation. The Calvinist hold that the fact that the “book of life,” mentioned in Revelation 13: 8; 17:8, presupposes that God has preordained all of the elect from the foundations of the world. On the other hand, Revelation 20:12⁸⁷ also supports Rev. Wesley’s view, and, when taken in the totality of entire Sacred Scriptures, supports the Armenian view.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. ¶ 88.

⁸⁷ Revelation 20:12 says: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

Discussion 17. Does “sanctification” require “joint cooperation” between God and Human Beings?

Yes, according to Rev. Wesley’s biblical analysis and exegesis.

In order to answer this question, we must first define the word sanctification. That concept is considered to describe the spiritual growth toward ultimate spiritual perfection, following justification and baptism.

Under the Calvinist view, God essentially does all of the choosing and all of the perfecting; but the Calvinist Church does impose very strict “church” standards that would presuppose the duty of moral of godly living and holiness.

Under Wesleyan or Armenian view, God’s sanctifying grace is a joint communion between individual human beings and with Christ and the Holy Spirit, allowing each man or woman to grow in perfection through sanctifying grace. As I have written in the “Introduction,” Augustine and Luther appear to have embraced this view, that although all human beings are totally depraved by original sin, that God has supernaturally restored some divine light within all human beings, allowing them to choose between good and evil, or to accept Christ as their redeemer and savior.

Beyond “justification,” there appears to be little difference between Calvinism and Wesleyan-Armenian doctrine on “sanctification,” because both doctrines—whether through ecclesiastical discipline and notions of holiness or godly living—impose similar standards of godliness, with only minor differences.

Calvinists insist, however, that the Armenian tolerance for “free will” opens the door to secular humanism and non-biblical standards of living. Rev. Wesley, however, did not extend “free will” to matters of justification and sanctification; and he insisted, too, that strict biblical standards were necessary. As there is but one Spirit of God, there must be but one standard of spiritual holiness and growth—either way, some human choice and involvement are quintessential.

Discussion 18. Can Calvinists be saved under their soteriological doctrine of “irresistible grace?”

Yes, according to Rev. Wesley, but this is only because God has the power to draw something good out from bad.⁸⁸

Rev. Wesley argues that there is not one plain or clear text in the Bible to support the doctrine of “irresistible grace.”

‘Nay, but God must work irresistibly in me, or I shall never be saved.’ Hold! Consider that word. You are again advancing a doctrine which has not one plain, clear text to support it. I allow, God may possibly, at some times, work irresistibly in some souls. I believe he doe. But can you infer from hence, that he always works thus in all that are saved? Alas! My brother, what kind of conclusion is this? And by what scripture will you prove it? Where, I pray, is it written, that none are saved but by irresistible grace? By almighty grace, I grant; by that power alone, to which all things are possible. But show me any one plain scripture for this,-- that “all saving grace is irresistible.”

But again, Rev. Wesley offers the following scriptures, in order to show that the theology of “irresistible grace” is a flat contradiction of Scripture:

- “He sent to call them, and they would not come.” (Matthew 23:3, etc.).
- “The Pharisees and Lawyers made void the counsel of God against themselves.” (Luke 7:30)
- “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children, and ye would not!” (Luke 13:34)
- “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit. But there are some of you that believe not.” (John 6:63, etc.)
- “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: As your fathers did, so do ye.” (Acts 7:51)
- “Ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life.” (Acts 13:46).
- “While it is called today, harden not your heart. Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, departing from the living God.” (Acts 7:51)

⁸⁸ Ibid., ¶ 88.

- “Ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life.” (Acts 13:46). F
- “While it is called today, harden not your heart. Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, departing from the living God.” (Hebrews 3:8, 12)
- “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh.” (Hebrews 12:25)

Wesley thus emphatically rejected the Calvinist theological concepts of “irresistible grace,” “unconditional election,” and “final perseverance.”

Discussion 19. Is Calvinism practical for preaching the Gospel to the lost and unsaved?

Yes, according to Rev. Wesley’s biblical analysis and exegesis, God could “draw good out of” Calvinism. He felt that both Calvinism and Wesleyan-Armenianism imposed the same standards of “inward and outward holiness.”⁸⁹ Indeed, in *Predestination Calmly Considered*, Wesley informed the Calvinist brethren, “you believe, as well as I, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”⁹⁰

Therefore, pure, authentic Calvinism—in and of itself—present no existential threat to Armenian sects of Christianity, because once the soteriological doctrines of irresistible grace, unconditional reprobation, and unconditional election are traversed, the actual Christian experience of the Calvinist and the Wesleyan-Armenian is similar, because neither group have very differing standards of holiness and righteousness. (Neither the Calvinists or the Armenians have the “book of life” that is mentioned in the Book of Revelation, and so neither sect can know for certain who are the true members of the “invisible church.”)

The true saint of God’s “invisible church” is predestinated and elected by God’s grace alone, as the Calvinists proclaim; but the true Saint is also one who is justified by grace; sanctified by grace; and grows in holiness, as the Wesleyan-Armenians proclaim—the “book of life” contains the names of these Saints. Whether the lost souls who shall sink into hell for everlasting punishment were predestinated from the beginning of time, or whether they shall be sentenced at a Final Judgment because they refused to believe in Christ, does not change the fact that they shall remain in hell for time everlasting. Even if the Calvinists are wrong about reprobation and election, as Wesley claims that they are, it is hard to say that a Calvinist who perseveres and grows in holiness and sanctification, albeit under a false notion that he is predestinated through irresistible grace, will not receive salvation even though he be mistaken. Indeed, a Calvinist who perseveres in holiness and sanctification may nevertheless be saved, though he or she be mistaken about their unconditional election. But the reverse is also true: a Wesleyan-Armenian who preserves in holiness and sanctification may nevertheless be saved, though may not realize that their election is unconditional.

⁸⁹ Ibid., ¶¶ 89-90.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

In the Wikipedia article on Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), who is the founder of Arminian theology, the controversy between Calvinism and Arminianism was brought before the Supreme Court in the Hague. “The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Reinout van Brederode ... concluded that ‘the points of difference between the two professors, mostly relating to the subtle details of doctrine of predestination, were of minor importance and could co-exist... [and] enjoined both gentlemen [i.e., Jacobus Arminius and Franciscus Gomarus] to tolerate one another lovingly.’”⁹¹ Therefore, as a Reformed Wesleyan, I have reached the same theological conclusion as Justice van Brederode, that the two doctrines of universal atonement on the one hand and unconditional election on the other, may co-exist peacefully and with mutual respect.

⁹¹ [Jacobus Arminius - Wikipedia](#)

Conclusion

This paper reviewed Rev. John Wesley's theological analysis of Calvinism and several of its major tenets on "predestination," including the doctrines of limited atonement, irresistible grace, unconditional election, perseverance of saints, and several related topics. The question of predestination is a question of biblical hermeneutics. The Calvinists, as was John Calvin, are champions of biblical hermeneutics, and their fidelity to the Sacred Scriptures is laudable. Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* remains authoritative and influential in Christendom. Nevertheless, Rev. Wesley's countervailing position, as reflected in *Predestination Calmly Considered*, on "predestination" is no less imposing, having itself been substantiated by numerous, coherent, and persuasive biblical references. Wesley's arguments are well-written, well-organized, and cogent: God's sovereignty should never be construed in a vacuum or in isolation of his other attributes: Mercy, Truth, and Justice. When considered within this totality, Wesley's position that "double predestination" is unsupported in the Sacred Scriptures is masterfully set forth in *Predestination Calmly Considered*. And yet, as Wesley himself has suggested, the Calvinist standard for outward and inward holiness is no different than the Methodist standard.

THE END

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APPENDIX A. Analogy of Faith-- A Conflict within the Ranks of Reformed Clergy

“Whitefield vs. Wesley”⁹²

“When George Whitefield left England in 1739, he was the recognized leader of the evangelical awakening, and he entrusted his thousands of followers to John Wesley’s care.

“WHEN HE RETURNED, in early 1741, he found that “many of my spiritual children . . . will neither hear, see, nor give me the least assistance: Yes, some of them send threatening letters that God will speedily destroy me. ”

“What had happened? Wesley had preached and published on two subjects dividing the leaders: predestination (whether God foreordains people’s eternal destiny) and perfection (whether sinlessness is attainable in this life).

“Whitefield met with both Charles and John Wesley in early 1741, but they could not find common ground. Wrote Whitefield, “It would have melted any heart to have heard Mr. Charles Wesley and me weeping, after prayer, that if possible the breach might be prevented.” The movement had been forever divided between the followers of Wesley and the followers of Whitefield.

“Christian History asked J. D. Walsh to explain how Whitefield and Wesley met, how their conflict began, and how their relationship changed.

“The relationship between George Whitefield and John Wesley, the two great leaders of the eighteenth- century revival, cannot be neatly described. Their association passed through very different stages.

“Deference: Oxford Methodists

“Whitefield arrived at Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1732, a raw, provincial youth with a West Country accent. (He never lost it; accounts of his preaching describe his “twang through the nose” and the way he pronounced “Christ” as “Chroist.”) Whitefield had

⁹² This article, “Whitefield vs. Wesley” is reprinted from the Christian History Institute: <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/wesley-vs-whitefield>

come from the tap—room of the family inn and was working his way through college, waiting on richer students. “As for my quality, I was a poor drawer” [of ale], he wrote.

“Whitefield had heard of the “Holy Club” before he arrived, and after Charles Wesley kindly asked him to breakfast, he was swiftly drawn into the fellowship. It was Charles, open—hearted and emotional, rather than the steely—willed and self-controlled John, who was his chief Oxford mentor.

“Whitefield spoke “with the utmost deference and respect” of the brothers Wesley, who had been to famous boarding schools and were his seniors. During a period of acute distress, Whitefield was sent for advice to John, and thanks to his “excellent advice and management,” Whitefield “was delivered from the wiles of Satan.” This was a somewhat subservient relationship. Whitefield wrote, “From time to time Mr. Wesley permitted me to come to him and instructed me as I was able to bear it.” Whitefield deferred to John Wesley as his “spiritual father in Christ” and his letters addressed Wesley as “Honoured sir.”

“Partnership: Revival Takes Off

“In 1736 John Wesley entrusted the newly ordained Whitefield with the oversight of the Oxford Methodists, while he was away in Georgia. Whitefield soon soared to national fame as “the boy preacher.” Autograph hunters besieged him. A flood of pamphlets attacked him. He was lavishly praised and compared to Moses, to David, and to Wycliffe as the “morning star” of a second Reformation. As Whitefield freely confessed, fame went to his head. He wrote one minister in 1739: “Success, I fear, elated my mind. I did not behave to you, and other ministers of Christ, with that humility which became me.”

“Although Whitefield’s evangelistic success far outstripped that of his former instructor, he showed Wesley deep respect. “I am but a novice; you are acquainted with the great things of God,” he told him in March 1739. Before inviting Wesley to join him in Bristol that year, he told his converts that “there was one coming after him whose shoes’ latchett he was not worthy to unloose.”

“Yet at this critical phase of the revival, young, exuberant, Whitefield took the lead, dragging behind the older, more cautious Wesley. In spring 1739 Whitefield took the momentous step of preaching outdoors— first to the grimy coalminers around Bristol, and then to the street poor of London. This turned methodism outward, from respectable Anglican societies toward the huge unchurched mass. Whitefield now pushed the reluctant Wesleys into following him as field preachers.

“In 1739, as vistas of astonishing evangelistic success opened up, Whitefield and the Wesleys worked in the closest harmony, as brothers and equals. When Whitefield won converts through his amazing oratory, he relied on Wesley to help organize and instruct them.

“Discord: Fight over Grace

“A few months later, however, the two leaders were locked in angry debate. By 1740 the infant Methodist movement was split irrevocably into two camps.

“It was inevitable that the issue of predestination would trouble the movement. The Wesleys were unshakable “Arminians” who denied predestination, yet the revival drew zealous recruits from areas in which Puritan Calvinism was much alive. At first, Whitefield was no predestinarian, but by the time he sailed to America in the summer of 1739, he was reading Calvinist books. Contact with fervent American Calvinists filled out his knowledge.

“Even before Whitefield departed, John Wesley had decided to attack the Calvinist theory of grace. In March 1739 he not only preached but published a passionately Arminian sermon entitled *Free Grace*. This step was taken with great unease; only after seeking a sign from heaven and drawing lots twice, did Wesley go into battle.

“John Wesley feared that Calvinism propagated fatalism and discouraged growth in holiness. Charles Wesley feared that predestination (and particularly the idea of reprobation, that God predestined some to damnation) represented a loving God as a God of hate. In his famous hymn *Wrestling Jacob*, he deliberately capitalized the sentence “Pure Universal Love Thou Art.”

“Whitefield, who was always more irenic than John Wesley, demurred before replying. He made it clear he was no follower, but a leader, and in some respects in front of his old adviser: “As God was pleased to send me out first, and to enlighten me first, so I think he still continues to do it.” Even now, however, he recognized Wesley’s enormous talent for the nurture of souls: “My business seems to be chiefly in planting; if God sends you to water, I praise his name.”

“Nonetheless, on Christmas Eve 1740 Whitefield wrote his riposte to Wesley, defending the Calvinist doctrine of grace.

“The controversy was fueled when Wesley provocatively published *Free Grace* in America. Whitefield, when invited to preach in Wesley’s headquarters at the London Foundery,

scandalized the congregation by preaching “the absolute decrees [of election] in the most peremptory and offensive manner,” while Charles sat beside him, fuming.

“From 1740 the revival moved along parallel lines. **Wesley’s “United Societies”** were matched by the growth of **“Calvinistic Methodist” societies in England and Wales**. In London, **Whitefield’s followers set up his Tabernacle in the same street as Wesley’s Foundery, and in rivalry with it.**

“Cooling: Agreement to Differ

“By 1742 tempers were beginning to cool. **Open-hearted evangelist Howell Harris worked to reunite the two parties, but he found this impossible, partly because “neither of the sides can submit to . . . the other head—Mr. Wesley or Mr. Whitefield.”** Indeed, the followers of both men often proved more partisan than their champions.

“Far more united the antagonists than ever separated them. **Whitefield was a moderate Calvinist; he did not let the doctrine of predestination hinder him from offering grace to all, or from insisting on the need for holiness in believers.** John Wesley allowed (for a time) that some souls might be elected to eternal life. **When not overheated, both men saw such issues as non-essentials.** At the height of the controversy, Whitefield quoted the reformer John Bradford: “Let a man go to the grammar school of faith and repentance, before he goes to the university of election and predestination.”

“No merger of the two camps occurred, but there was at least reconciliation between the leaders. This “closer union in affection” continued with hiccups, but no serious interruption, to Whitefield’s death. **In 1755, Charles Wesley could write happily, “Come on, my Whitefield! (since the strife is past) / And friends at first are friends again at last.”**

“The relationship was described by one of Wesley’s preachers as **“agreement to differ.”** **Whitefield was welcomed to preach among Wesley’s societies. Wesley lent Whitefield one of his best preachers, Joseph Cownley, for work at the Tabernacle. Whitefield refused to build Calvinistic chapels in places that already had a Wesleyan society. Wesley agreed to the reverse.** More than once Whitefield acted as mediator when the Wesley brothers fell out, notably when Charles sabotaged John’s marriage prospects to Grace Murray.

“This friendship continued even though the old split was not forgotten. Writing his *Short History of Methodism* in 1765, John Wesley did not conceal his conviction that Whitefield and the Calvinists had made “the first breach” in the revival. Whitefield felt that the idyllic harmony of early 1739—“heaven on earth” when all were “like little children”—had been broken by Wesley’s sermon on *Free Grace*.

“Complementary Gifts

“Ultimately, what eased relations between the two great leaders was **Whitefield’s decision, in 1749, to abandon formal leadership of the Calvinistic Methodist societies.** He thus posed no threat to Wesley as chief organizer of the revival.

“**Whitefield** was certainly not inadequate as a pastor and organizer, but he realized his primary calling lay as a “wayfaring witness.” **His determination to shuttle continually between England, Scotland, and America meant he could never, like Wesley, provide oversight for a great connection of societies.** “An itinerant pilgrim life is that which I choose,” he wrote, **so he cheerfully let other pastors gather the lost sheep he had found.**

“Wesley, in contrast, insisted his converts be organized and built up in the faith. He resolved not to send preachers where he could not form societies, because failure to support new converts was like “begetting children for the murderer.” **In Wesley’s view, the Great Awakening subsided largely because Whitefield’s converts did not receive adequate spiritual oversight.**

“Both **Whitefield and Wesley (and the Moravians) deserve credit as Founding Fathers of the great revival.** What is most striking is the providential complementarity of the two men’s gifts. More than any evangelist before him, **Whitefield was given the ability to scatter the seed of God’s Word across the world. To Wesley, preeminently, was granted the ability to garner the grain and preserve it.**

“In 1770, the year of his death, Whitefield wrote to Charles as “my very dear old friend” and described John as “your honoured brother.” To each he bequeathed a mourning ring, “in token of my indissoluble union with them in heart and Christian affection, notwithstanding our difference in judgment about some particular points of doctrine.” On Whitefield’s death, Charles penned a noble elegy. **And at Whitefield’s request, his funeral sermon was preached by none other than his former opponent, John Wesley.”**

THE END