

THE METHODIST LAW CENTRE



Corporate Headquarters

Episcopal Legal Services District, Inc.
Tampa, Florida
(813) 223-1200
(813) 223-4226 facsimile
www.methodistlawcentre.com

Mailing Address:

The Methodist Law Centre
5745 S.W. 75th Street
Box # 149
Gainesville, Florida 32608
(352) 559-5544
(800) 791-2241 facsimile
www.methodistlawcentre.com

Officers & Directors

Rev. Roderick O. Ford, Esq., SPHR
Rev. Dr. Kenneth Sharpton Glasgow
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Rev. Todd Ruddell
Christ Covenant Reformed
Presbyterian Church

Rev. Jason L. Bradfield
Christ Presbyterian Church

FROM: Rev. Roderick O. Ford, Esq.
The Methodist Law Centre

RE: Predestination Revisited

DATE: August 26, 2022

Dear Revs. Ruddell and Bradfield:

As I traveled to Lakeland of August 25, 2022 to attend Dr. Talbot's funeral services, I revisited T.U.L.I.P. again and again in my mind.

T. I conceptualized "total depravity" to human beings were totally without power to save themselves from eternal damnation. This I firmly believe.

U. I conceptualized "unconditional election" to mean purely the divine foreknowledge of who will saved. Within that divine foreknowledge is an unchangeable status with respect to those persons who God foreknows will ultimately be saved.

L. I conceptualized that "limited atonement" simply means that in the broad divine scheme there are "sheep and goats" or "wheat and tares," and that goats and the tares are already foreknown in God's divine knowledge. Christ thus came to save the only his lost sheep and the wheat whom God has given to him— not Satan and Satan's demonic angels and their human followers who God foreknew would not repent.

I. I conceptualized "irresistible grace" to follow along the same lines as "unconditional election." Both are eternal facts within the divine foreknowledge of God.

P. I conceptualized "Perseverance of the saints" to fall along the same lines as "unconditional election" and "irresistible grace."

Within that divine foreknowledge is an unchangeable status with respect to those persons who God foreknows will ultimately persevere and be saved.

As an Augustinian theologian who believes firmly in God's omniscience, I do not have a problem with the theology of Predestination. However, I do not believe that God's foreknowledge is the "cause" of anyone's sin or eternal damnation. God knows who is going to receive eternal damnation; but God does not "cause" anyone to receive that damnation.¹

There is not human "free will." See, e.g., Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*; Luther, *On the Bondage of the Will*; Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. But there is sufficient "voluntary will"² within each human being, so that each human being may choose between Life and Death, Blessing and Curse. (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Of course, we all know that all human beings will not choose Life or Blessing.

Therefore, we may conclude that "limited atonement" was Christ's ultimate purpose.

¹ Augustine of Hippo held generally in *The City of God* that "all" men were born in a state of sin, but "need not remain" in that state. "For in each individual," wrote Augustine, "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. 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." *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 478-479. Also, Augustine's theological statement "nor did His foreknowledge compel any one to sin... But God preferred to leave this in their power, and thus to show both what evil could be wrought by their pride, and what good by His grace," completely contradicts the orthodox Calvinist doctrine of "limited atonement." Ibid., pp. 476-477. (NOTE: Oxford Methodism seeks to align the soteriological doctrines of Baxter and Wesley to the those of Augustine of Hippo, who is the spiritual father of both Luther and Calvin.)

² Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, p. 154 -155.

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.

But since those persons who are the "elect of God" are now "secret to us,"³ we should approach each human being with a great deal of humility and respect, because we do not have the power to say one way or another whether God will save them or not. I would cite the "Thief on the Cross"⁴ as an example.

For this reason, the word of God must be preached to the entire world as though the "sower of the seeds" who recognizes that there will be some tares that will spring up among the wheat.⁵ The wheat and the tares are intermingled together in this world.⁶

This is where I currently stand on predestination.

If this be congruent with Westminster standards, then I would like to grow in fellowship and grace within your Reformed church denomination.

Yours Faithfully,

Rev. Roderick O. Ford, Esq.
Executive Director, The Methodist Law
Centre

³ Article 17 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.

⁴ Luke 23: 39-43.

⁵ Matthew 13: 24-30.

⁶ Id.

APPENDIX A

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

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

The Thirty Nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England embraces a theological doctrine of predestination which focuses on God’s eternal purpose that all mankind might accept the covenant of everlasting salvation (i.e. “general or universal atonement,” but which only some of mankind—whom God foreknew from the foundations of the world—would actually accept that offer of salvation.¹⁹ God’s foreknowledge, however, is “secret to us,” so that no mortal human being can know who will, or who will not, attain this everlasting salvation. Mankind’s lack of knowledge of those persons whom God has called or elected, reinforces the duty of humility, and being nonjudgmental of the spiritual sanctity of other human beings. Only God’s grace is implied in predestination, and not the good works of human beings; such that those human beings who lack the desire, inspiration, and motivation to do good works, or to accept the covenant of everlasting salvation, are

¹⁹ **CHURCH OF ENGLAND 39 ARTICLES OF RELIGION: Article XVII, “Of Predestination and Election”**

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

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

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

tragically doomed to everlasting punishment.

The Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647 also embrace a doctrine of predestination which embrace the theological idea of “limited” atonement, stating those persons—and only those persons—who are predestinated unto Salvation are those whom God hath chosen from the foundation of the world.²⁰

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

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

Surely, if there is a mind that so greatly abounds in knowledge and

²⁰ WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH (1647) Chapter X. Of Effectual Calling.

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

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

But far be it from you, creator of the universe, and creator of our souls and bodies—far be it from you that you should merely know all things past and future. Far, far more wonderfully, and far more mysteriously you know them. For it is not as the feelings of one singing familiar songs, or hearing a familiar song in which, because of his expectation of words still to come and his remembrance of those that are past, his feelings are varied and his senses are divided. This is not the way that anything happens to you, who are unchangeably eternal, that is, the truly eternal creator of minds. As in the beginning you knew both the heaven and the earth without any change in your knowledge, so you made heaven and earth in their beginnings without any division in your action. Let him who understands this confess to you, and let him who does not understand also confess to you! Exalted as you are, still the humble in heart are your dwelling place! For you lift them who are cast down and they fall not for whom you are the most high.²¹

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

Augustine of Hippo says:

But it does not follow that, though there is for God a certain order of all causes, there must therefore be nothing depending on the free exercise of our own wills, for our wills themselves are included in that order of causes which is certain to God, and is embraced by His foreknowledge, for human wills are also causes of human actions; and He who foreknew all the cause of things would certainly among those causes not have been ignorant of our wills.²²

Therefore, at least for Augustine of Hippo, these two ideals—God’s omnipotence

²¹ St. Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 204.

²² St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 154-155.

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

This race we have distributed into two parts, the one consisting of those who live according to man, the other of those who live according to God. And these we also mystically call the two cities, or the two communities of men, of which the one is **predestined** to reign eternally with God, and the other to suffer eternal punishment with the devil. This, however, is their end, and of it we are to speak afterwards.... Of these two first parents of the human race, then, Cain was the first-born, and he belonged to the city of men; after him was born Abel, who belonged to the city of God. For as in the individual the truth of the apostle's statement is discerned, 'that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual,'²³ whence it comes to pass that each man, being derived from a condemned stock, is first of all born of Adam evil and carnal, **and becomes good and spiritual only afterwards, when he is grafted into Christ by regeneration**: so was it in the human race as a whole. When these two cities began to run their course by a series of deaths and births, the citizen of this world was the first-born, **and after him the stranger in this world, the citizen of the city of God, predestinated by grace, elected by grace, by grace a stranger below, and by grace a citizen above**. By grace—for so far as regards himself he is sprung from the same mass, all of which is condemned in its origin; but God, like a potter (or this comparison is introduced by the apostle judiciously, and not without thought), **of the same lump made one vessel to honour, another to dishonor**.²⁴ 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,

²³ 1 Corinthians 25:46.

²⁴ Romans 9:21.

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.²⁵

Augustine of Hippo's thesis on predestination is that all men are born reprobate, "but...we need not necessarily remain" in this state of reprobation.²⁶ There is in Augustine's theology, then, free choice and voluntary will—but not "free will"; that is to say, there is no free human will that is independent of God's omnipotent will, as is espoused by secular humanism. But, according to Augustine, there is, instead, within each human being a voluntariness of will, or what we may call "voluntary will," whereby they "need not necessarily remain" in a state of reprobation.²⁷ For in Augustinian theology, there is before every human being the choice between Good and Evil, as Moses presented that choice to Church of Israel in the Old Testament.

Augustine of Hippo expressly rejected "irresistible reprobation" and "irresistible election"—double predestination, because God did not "compel any one to sin."²⁸ Mankind's power of sin stems from his free choice, which is neither beyond God's foreknowledge and can do nothing to thwart God's sovereign will—as many Calvinists incorrectly assume. In *The City of God*, Augustine of Hippo writes:

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

²⁵ *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 478-479.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 476.

constituted, that if he looked to God for help, man's goodness should defeat the angel's wickedness; **but if by proud self-pleasing he abandoned God**, his Creator and Sustainer, he should be conquered. **If his will remained upright, through leaning on God's help, he should be rewarded; if it became wicked, by forsaking God, he should be punished.** But even this **trusting in God's help could not itself be accomplished without God's help**, although man had it in **his own power to relinquish the benefits of divine grace by pleasing himself.** For as it is not in our power to live in the world without sustaining ourselves by food, while it is in our power to refuse this nourishment and cease to live, as those who kill themselves, **so it was not in man's power, even in Paradise, to live as he ought without God's help; but it was in his power to live wickedly**, though thus he should cut short his happiness, and incur very just punishment. Since, then, God was not ignorant that man would fall, why should He not have suffered him to be tempted by an angel who hated and envied him? It was not, indeed, that He was unaware that he should be conquered, but because **He foresaw that the man's seed, aided by divine grace, this same devil himself should be conquered**, to the greater glory of the saints. All was brought about in such a manner, that neither did any future even escape God's knowledge, **nor did His foreknowledge compel any one to sin**, and so as to demonstrate in the experience of the intelligent creation, human and angelic, how great a difference there is between the private presumption of the creature and the Creator's protection. For who will dare to believe or say that it was not in God's power to prevent both angels and men from sinning? **But God preferred to leave this in their power**, and thus to show both what evil could be wrought by their pride, and what good by His grace.²⁹

And men are punished by God for their sins often visibly, always secretly, either in this life or after death, although no man acts rightly save by divine aid; and no man or devil acts unrighteously save by the permission of the divine and most just judgment.³⁰

Thus, Reformed Methodism thus embraces this Augustinian view of divine "omniscience," divine "omnipotence," divine "election," divine "grace," and

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 476- 477.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 711

“predestination.” Augustine says that God has not compelled “any one to sin.”³¹ Hence, the Calvinists have misjudged God’s omnipotence and foreknowledge: God need not “control” man’s choice—for mankind actually has “no free will” but only a “free choice” between good and evil; and mankind’s free choice of evil (i.e., sin) leads only to one inevitable result: death (e.g., suicide) and everlasting punishment. This Reformed-Methodist theological doctrine is not Pelagianism, Arminianism, semi-Augustinianism, or secular “free will.” Like Martin Luther’s *On Bondage of the Will*, the human will is in bondage to sinful living and can do no other; but, with God’s help and grace, that same human will may choose to live righteously.

The Reformed Methodist Theologian must therefore implore modern-day Calvinists to carefully re-consider John Calvin’s Augustinian theology within the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, in light of the actual words and teachings of Jesus Christ (i.e., the Lord’s Prayer and the Parables); in light of Article 17 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England; and in light of Augustine of Hippo’s actual writings in *On Grace and Free Will*, *Confessions* and *The City of God*, in order to show that “double-predestination” is not an orthodox Christian doctrine. The two great and universal commandments—the duty to love God and to love our fellow humankind—hang all of the law and the prophets, upon which Jesus of Nazareth expounded upon in his several parables (e.g., “Parable of the Good Samaritan” (Luke 10: 25-37) and “Parable of the Unmerciful Servant” (Matt. 18: 23-35).

THE END

³¹ Ibid., p. 476.