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ATTN: Dr. Kenneth Talbot, President
1605 E. Gary Road
Lakeland, Florida 33801

Dear Dr. Talbot:

I finally have gotten some traction and focus with my post-doctoral research. From the beginning, as you know, it has always been my objective to help “purify” the present mainline Methodist Church by inculcating within it the orthodox doctrines of the Early Church, Puritanism, and the Protestant Reformation. While we may never reach a consensus between Arminians and Calvinists on the doctrine of predestination, I believe Christ’s “law of Love” mandates that we work together, as we recognize our common Christian beliefs found in Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, together with the need to address our common enemies of racism, secular humanism, materialism, militarism, and Christian apostasy from within the church.

It is my suggestion that Calvinists and Wesleyan-Arminians or Methodists come together periodically under one ecumenical roof to study or consider the theological doctrine of “Reformed Methodism,” which I have coined and copyrighted for the Whitefield Theological Seminary. Henceforth, with your approval, I would like to write the remaining course material from this ecumenical perspective, with the objective of further setting forth my new **Reformed Methodist Theology (RMT)©**. **I have developed RMT over six years of theological and historical research, and I would like to complete this work under the auspices of the Whitefield Theological Seminary.**

Reformed Methodist Theology (RMT)© traces the historical origins of the Methodist Church to 16th and 17th-century Puritanism and to the Early Church.¹

¹ It should be stated here that “Reformed Protestant Theology” was a reaction to the theology of the Roman Catholic Church as it existed during the mid-sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries. The Protestant Reformers wished to return to the true, authentic church—to the Early Church! This required the Protestant Reformers to review Roman Catholic theology, philosophy, and liturgy, and to cull out all of the papists’ false doctrines. Rev. Martin Luther led the way, but Rev. John Calvin seemed to have reached the pinnacle of reformed theological analysis and critic of Roman Catholicism in his path-breaking book, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. In general, the Protestant Reformers rejected all of the Roman Catholic councils that occurred after the Council of Chalcedon in the year 451,

With respect to ecclesiology, RMT acknowledges both the Early Church together with the historical fact that the Methodist Church came into existence through Rev. John Wesley's acceptance of ancient liturgical practices within the Alexandrian Church.² Hence, the Early Church's Fathers, such as Athanasius of Alexandria (296 – 373 A.D.) and Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.) loom large in RMT.

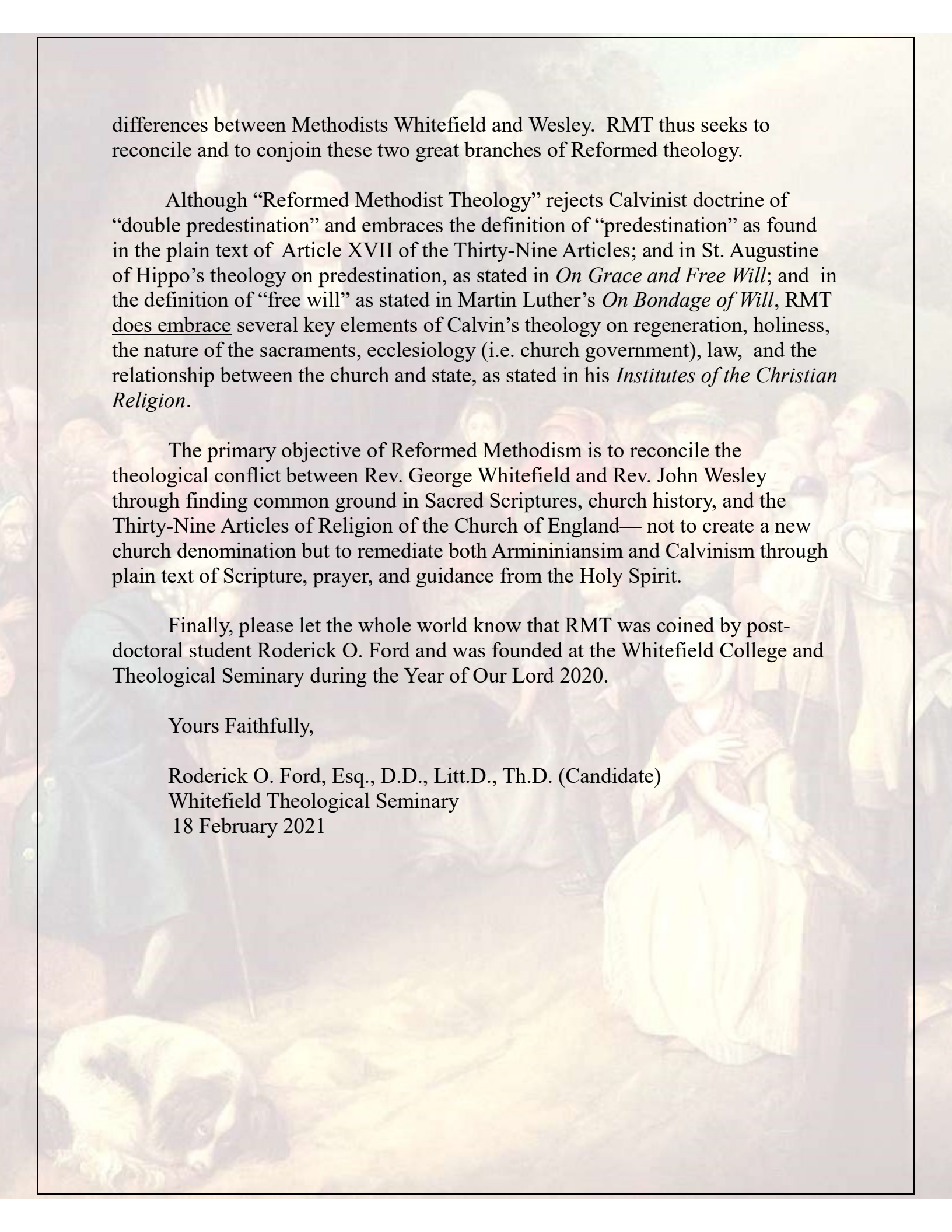
Significantly, RMT shall be defined as an Anglican theology that is deeply-rooted in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. As such, RMT seeks to remediate the conflict between Whitefield's Calvinism and Wesleyan-Arminianism theology and philosophy. RMT compares these two theologies with the plain language of the Articles IX, X, XI and XVII of the Church of England's Thirty-Nine Articles in order remediate the conflict that grew out of the theological

A.D. Thus, the Protestant Reformers accepted only four of the first nineteen ecumenical councils, as follows:

1. **First Council of Nicaea in 325**
2. **First Council of Constantinople in 381**
3. **Council of Ephesus in 431**
4. **Council of Chalcedon in 451**
5. Second Council of Constantinople in 553
6. Third Council of Constantinople from 680-681
7. Second Council of Nicaea in 787
8. Fourth Council of Constantinople in 869
9. First Lateran Council in 1123
10. Second Lateran Council in 1139
11. Third Lateran Council in 1179
12. Fourth Lateran Council in 1215
13. First Council of Lyons in 1245
14. Second Council of Lyons in 1274
15. Council of Vienne from 1311-1313
16. Council of Constance from 1414-1418
17. Council of Basle/ Ferrar/ Florence, 1431-1439
18. Fifth Lateran Council from 1512-1517
19. Council of Trent from 1545-1563

The Protestant Reformers also adopted the first three major creeds (i.e., the "Ecumenical Creeds") of the Christian Church—the Nicene Creed of 325 A.D.; the Apostle's Creed of 341 A.D.; and the Athanasian Creed (4th century, A.D.)—which were promulgated during the period of the first four ecumenical councils, up through the beginning of the fifth century, A.D. The sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers thus rejected the other remaining fifteen ecumenical councils—from the Second Council of Constantinople up through the Council of Trent. For this reason, the Council of Trent (1545-1563), which had been held in response to the work and doctrines held by Martin Luther and other Reformers, was designed to formulate a response to the Protestant Reformation, which the Roman Catholics called the "Counter-Reformation." It thus should here be noted that the Protestant Reformers largely embraced only the imminent Western and Eastern Catholic divines who lived before the year 500 A.D.—men such as Jerome, Augustine, Theodore of Mopsuesitia and John Chrysostom—after which period (i.e., the fifth century, A.D.), according to the Protestant Reformers, the Western and Eastern Churches has spiraled out of control, and fallen into a downward spiritual decline of doctrinal heresy and internal corruption. The Protestant Reformers thus sought to extract the historical ancient church of the first century, A.D., from the grip of teachings of the Medieval papists. (Although Henry VIII's Church of England did not make so clean a break from Roman Catholic rituals and practices as did the Lutherans and the Calvinists).

² See Exhibit A, "Methodism and the Ancient Church of Alexandria."



differences between Methodists Whitefield and Wesley. RMT thus seeks to reconcile and to conjoin these two great branches of Reformed theology.

Although “Reformed Methodist Theology” rejects Calvinist doctrine of “double predestination” and embraces the definition of “predestination” as found in the plain text of Article XVII of the Thirty-Nine Articles; and in St. Augustine of Hippo’s theology on predestination, as stated in *On Grace and Free Will*; and in the definition of “free will” as stated in Martin Luther’s *On Bondage of Will*, RMT does embrace several key elements of Calvin’s theology on regeneration, holiness, the nature of the sacraments, ecclesiology (i.e. church government), law, and the relationship between the church and state, as stated in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

The primary objective of Reformed Methodism is to reconcile the theological conflict between Rev. George Whitefield and Rev. John Wesley through finding common ground in Sacred Scriptures, church history, and the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England— not to create a new church denomination but to remediate both Arminianism and Calvinism through plain text of Scripture, prayer, and guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Finally, please let the whole world know that RMT was coined by post-doctoral student Roderick O. Ford and was founded at the Whitefield College and Theological Seminary during the Year of Our Lord 2020.

Yours Faithfully,

Roderick O. Ford, Esq., D.D., Litt.D., Th.D. (Candidate)
Whitefield Theological Seminary
18 February 2021

EXHIBIT A: Methodism and the Ancient Church of Alexandria by Roderick O. Ford, Litt.D.

During the period of the American Revolutionary War (1775-1787), a crisis occurred in churches of England and America because of war and strained relations between the colonists and the British. Within the Methodist movement, which was still considered to be a part of the Church of England, the problem of ordination of Methodist ministers soon emerged. Ordained Methodist ministers were then required to be ordained by a Bishop within the Church of England. After the commencement of the Revolutionary War in North America, the Bishop of London, who had jurisdiction over all Anglican churches there, refused to ordain any Anglican priests, let alone ministers within the Methodist movement. Rev. John Wesley, who was the leader of the Methodist Movement, was himself an ordained priest within the Church of England; but Anglican priests (i.e., presbyters) were not allowed to ordain ministers—only Bishops had this authority. At that time, the Church of England followed the same ecclesiastical rule as found in the Church of Rome: only the Bishop retained the authority to ordain a minister. A crisis soon occurred within the Methodist movement in North America: how would their ministers be ordained, without authority from a Bishop within the Church of England?

Thus faced with this crisis, Rev. Wesley searched the Scriptures and looked to ancient ecclesiological practices of the Church of Alexandria, Egypt for guidance. In doing so, he essentially returned to the dogma of the Early Church. In this case, Wesley bypassed the Western Church and looked to the first Oriental Orthodox Church—the Coptic Church of Alexandria, Egypt. That church has been founded by the Apostle John Mark (i.e., the author of the Gospel of St. Mark). In this ancient North African church, as noted by Martin Luther and others, the Bishops were elected by presbyters and elders—not appointed by an archbishop or a pope. Therefore, while following the ecclesiological example of the ancient Church of Alexandria, Rev. Wesley reasoned that ordained Anglican priests and elders, who were a part of the Methodist movement, retained emergency power to elect a superintendent or “bishop” for the Methodist movement in North America.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist tradition, believed that the offices of bishop and presbyter constituted one order, **citing an ancient opinion from the Church of Alexandria; Jerome, a Church Father, wrote: "For even at Alexandria from the time of Mark the Evangelist until the episcopates of Heraclas and Dionysius the**

presbyters always named as bishop one of their own number chosen by themselves and set in a more exalted position, just as an army elects a general, or as deacons appoint one of themselves whom they know to be diligent and call him archdeacon. For what function, excepting ordination, belongs to a bishop that does not also belong to a presbyter?" (Letter CXLVI). **John Wesley thus argued that for two centuries the succession of bishops in the Church of Alexandria, which was founded by Mark the Evangelist, was preserved through ordination by presbyters alone and was considered valid by that ancient Church.**

Citing this authority from the ancient Alexandrian habitude, Rev. Wesley, one other ordained Anglican priest, and two elders ordained Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury the first superintendents of the Methodist Church in British North America. Both Coke and Asbury assumed the title of "bishop," and this American church adopted the name "Methodist Episcopal Church."

It should be noted, that the Lutheran and Calvinist doctrines of the "priesthood of all believers" were central to Wesley's position on the ordination of Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury to the position of superintendent. Under the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, both "presbyters" and "bishops" are either appointed or elected by the congregation, which was the "priesthood of all believers," as defined as follows: "[b]ut ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light..." (1 Peter 2:9); and "[y]e also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:5).

The Methodist Church also buttresses this argument with the leg of sacred tradition of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral by citing the Church Fathers, many of whom concur with this view.

In addition to the aforementioned arguments, in 1937 the annual Conference of the British Methodist Church located the "true continuity" with the Church of past ages in "the continuity of Christian experience, the fellowship in the gift of the one Spirit; in the continuity in the allegiance to one Lord, the continued proclamation of the message; the continued acceptance of the mission;..." [through a long chain which goes back to] "the first disciples in the company of the Lord Himself ... This is our doctrine of apostolic succession" [which neither depends on,

nor is secured by,] "an official succession of ministers, whether bishops or presbyters, from apostolic times, but rather by fidelity to apostolic truth"

