

## The Church of the Servant King Soteriology Series

### SO\_6\_Predestination & Election – Part 5 – The Historical Background – 6<sup>th</sup> Thru 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries

In our previous two lessons, we have examined the historical development of the doctrine of predestination thru the 6<sup>th</sup> Century. This has included a review of the major points of the views of Augustine and Pelagius as well as the syncretistic semi-Pelagian position represented by such men as John Cassian. In the way of summary and review and prior to moving forward, I will provide the following recap of the major points.

<b>Augustine (A.D. 354 – 430)</b>	<b>Pelagius (A.D. 360-420)</b>	<b>Semi-Pelagian (e.g. Cassian and the Massilians)</b>
Original sin & the consequent corruption of the very nature of man	Adam – bad example; man still good	Original sin & corruption of nature
Man morally dead – incapable of producing “the good” (i.e. satisfaction of God’s righteousness)	Man morally healthy – man capable of producing “the good”	Man morally weakened – man capable of producing “the good” with God’s grace in assist
Irresistible grace (i.e. unconditional election)	All free to believe	All free to believe
Salvation & predestination – God’s choice to give grace to some	Predestination & salvation – God’s foreknowledge of who would do “the good” (i.e. satisfy God’s righteousness)	Salvation & predestination – salvation, a combination of works and grace. Rejected Augustinian notions of irresistible grace and believed predestination based upon foreknowledge.

One who is familiar with Reformed (Calvinistic) views on this subject can readily see the seeds of Calvinistic thought on the subject of predestination and election in their early stages of development with Augustine. For instance, the Calvinistic notion that faith is the gift referred to in Ephesians 2:8-9 is derived from or at least related to Augustine’s notion of irresistible grace. As a matter of fact the “I” in the acronym “TULIP” which is used to recall the five main points of Calvinism represents “irresistible grace.” I have already noted in an earlier lesson that the gift in Ephesians 2:8-9 is salvation and such an interpretation is better supported by the grammar of the passage. Soon, we will be examining these five points of Calvinistic thought on the subject in greater detail. But, before we do, we need to finish our historical development of the doctrine.

### The Medieval Age

The Medieval age witnessed a shift away from Augustine’s notions of moral depravity, the necessity of divine grace through the work of the Holy Spirit and Augustinian notions of predestination which involved God’s sovereign choice of those to whom He would provide irresistible grace. The shift that occurred during this period was toward a semi-Pelagianism. This shift is apparent in the positions of several prominent theologians.

*Gregory the Great (A.D. 540 – 604)* – Gregory was the bishop of Rome from A.D. 590 – A.D. 604. He rejected Augustine’s notions of predestination and irresistible grace. Gregory developed a theology that included the semi-Pelagian influenced ideas of penance and

progressive satisfaction for sin.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Gregory represented a milestone in the development of Romish theology which was semi-Pelagian in orientation.

Side Note: As an interesting aside, Muhammad (A.D. 570 – 632) was gaining quite a following to his new religion, Islam, during this period of time. Muhammad observed the “Christian church” align itself with the Eastern Roman Empire (the Byzantine Empire) in a seven year war against the Persians in A.D. 622. Perhaps it was from watching this “Christian” empire in action that Muhammad drew the conclusion that one’s faith should be tied to the use of the sword. Within just a few hundred years after Christ’s death, Satan seems to be having his way in the Angelic Conflict. After all, only a couple of hundred years prior, Constantine, the Emperor of Rome, went to battle with the symbol of the Cross on the shield of his soldiers (ca. A.D. 312). Augustine (A.D. 354 – 430) lived during this period of Constantine’s rule. The freedom from Roman persecution that Christians enjoyed during this period no doubt contributed to Augustine’s development of an amillennarian eschatology. With things so good in the sense that Christians were no longer suffering persecution at the hands of the state, many began to wonder if the millennial reign of Christ had really begun at His first advent as a spiritual kingdom. As such, Christ would return at the end of the one thousand year period that began with His 1<sup>st</sup> Advent to a world more suitable to His liking. This spiritualized approach to the interpretation of Scripture no doubt contributed to the development of erroneous views in several doctrinal categories as a non-dispensational approach was applied to the interpretation of Scripture. The soteriological category of doctrines were no exception.

*Gottschalk (ca. A.D. 804 – 869)* – Gottschalk represented an attempt to reverse the tide by stirring the church to advocate Augustinianism. He tended to stress the doctrine of predestination to the neglect of other doctrines.<sup>2</sup> He believed in a double predestination, i.e. that God not only immutably determined the elect, but He immutably decreed the non-elect. He also believed in the concept of limited atonement, i.e. that Christ died only for the elect and not the entirety of the human race. “He only carried Augustine’s doctrine to its extreme logical conclusions.”<sup>3</sup> In this sense, Gottschalk is similar to the Calvinist or the “experimental predestinarian”<sup>4</sup> of today who has carried the views of Augustine and the Reformers to their

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<sup>1</sup> John D. Hannah, “The Doctrines of Salvation (Sin and Grace) – Part III: The Medieval Church” (unpublished class notes in 510 N, History of Doctrine, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 1999), 20.10.

<sup>2</sup> Adolf Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 7 vols. bound as 4. (New York: Dover Publications, 1961), 2:239 cited in John D. Hannah, “The Doctrines of Salvation (Sin and Grace) – Part III: The Medieval Church” (unpublished class notes in 510 N, History of Doctrine, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 1999), 20.10.

<sup>3</sup> E. H. Klotsche, *The History of Christian Doctrine* (Burlington, Iowa: Lutheran Literary Board, 1945), 123 quoted in John D. Hannah, “The Doctrines of Salvation (Sin and Grace) – Part III: The Medieval Church” (unpublished class notes in 510 N, History of Doctrine, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 1999), 20.10.

<sup>4</sup> R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 143 quoted in Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings* (Haysville, NC: Schottle Publishing Company, 1993), 20. The term “experimental predestinarian” is derived from the view of those of the Reformed persuasion who view one’s salvation as verifiable only by one’s lifestyle afterwards. In other words, as Dillow so aptly explains it, “the hypothesis ‘I am saved’ is being tested by an experiment.” The experiment is one’s life after one’s alleged salvation. One’s salvation should be evidenced by works, i.e. good works. Dillow does an excellent job of pointing out the Scriptural and logical inconsistencies in this position and I will be using some of his arguments later in this series. In particular, as we approach the views of the Reformers and as we explore some of the practical and logical (or illogical) ramifications of the views of the experimental predestinarians in regard to life after salvation Dillow’s work will be a great help.

logical conclusion, e.g. the concept of the perseverance of the saints (the “P” in TULIP) as it applies to Phase II of the believer’s existence.<sup>5</sup>

As an interesting aside, Gottschalk was opposed by several theologians including one Hinkmar, the Archbishop of Rheims. Hinkmar based his view of predestination upon God’s foresight. Hinkmar had Gottschalk publicly whipped and forced into a secluded monastery where he was so badly treated that he lost his sanity.<sup>6</sup> The influence of the sin nature with its self-righteous passions is not limited to believers of a certain persuasion. Doctrinally correct and doctrinally incorrect believers are equally capable of self-righteous arrogance even to the point of persecution of those who hold different views. Only the spiritual believer has the capacity and the power to keep such influences at bay.

*Anselm of Canterbury (A.D. 1033 – 1109)* – Like Gottschalk, Anselm evidenced a certain alliance with Augustine’s views. Anselm’s focus was directed more towards advancing and clarifying the Augustinian perspective on original sin and grace. Therefore, the issue of predestination is not as prominent in his theology. He differed from Augustine on the issue of grace in that he did not believe in a concept of irresistible grace. Also, he believed that natural man has freedom, but not to choose “the good.” Thus, Anselm, like Gottschalk, represented an attempt to stem the semi-Pelagian tide that was predominate within the Roman Catholic Church during this era.

Side Note: The Crusades (A.D. 1095 – 1291) occurred during Anselm’s and Thomas Aquinas’ life and work. These were the “Christian” military expeditions commissioned by the Church to capture the “Holy Land” from Muslim rule. They were in keeping with the tradition of Christian militarism introduced by Constantine in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century. It is too bad that it made no difference whether the Church was dominated by semi-Pelagian thought with its emphasis upon the free will of man or whether there were semi-Augustinian influences at work via men such as Anselm and Aquinas with their emphasis upon the sovereignty of God. The fact is that as in most of history, religious self-righteousness is more in evidence in the actions of “Christians” than is spiritual thought. A spiritual man would have been motivated to take the gospel to the “heathen” world instead of a sword. Even the correctness [assuming one of these two groups was more correct] of one’s doctrine does not automatically imply correct execution.

*Aquinas, the Dominican (ca. A.D. 1224 – 1274)* – Aquinas was semi-Augustinian in his theology. Perhaps as a variation of Augustine’s view of irresistible grace, Aquinas made a distinction between prevenient grace which renews the will of man and a subsequent, co-operating grace [Phase II grace] that assists in the operational aspects of life. The former grace, he termed sufficient and the latter efficient grace.<sup>7</sup> “According to Thomas Aquinas there is first of all the infusion of grace, then the turning of the free will to God, next the turning of the free will

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<sup>5</sup> I have adopted terminology from other pastors that is used to describe the various stages of a believer’s existence. Phase I = that portion of the believer’s life up to salvation. Phase II = that portion of the believer’s life from the point of salvation to physical death and exit from this earthly life. Phase III = that portion of the believer’s existence in eternity after physical death.

<sup>6</sup> Hannah, unpublished notes, 20.10.

<sup>7</sup> Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1937), 212.

against sin, and, finally, the remission of guilt.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, Aquinas represents a “confused medley on opposites” and provides a good representation of the church of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>9</sup>

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The Church rejected Pelagianism (Council of Ephesus – A.D. 431) and then battled Cassian’s semi-Pelagianism only to mediate with a form of semi-Augustinianism (Synod of Orange – A.D. 529). During the Medieval era leading to the Reformation period, the church progressively slipped into semi-Pelagianism as evidenced by the harsh treatment of Gottschalk in the ninth Century. As we shall see next week, the Reformers break with semi-Pelagianism and return to Augustine in their soteriology.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>9</sup> Hannah, unpublished class notes, 20.18.