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Predestination in the Century Before Gottschalk, Part II

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I. The Preaching of Predestination

Part II of this series continues its challenge of a prevailing notion which says that the century before Gottschalk, a ninth-century monk condemned and imprisoned for his strong predestinarian views, was replete with Semi-Pelagian teaching. Part I demonstrated that Semi-Pelagian doctrine that exalted human freedom and articulated divine predestination as simply God's foreknowledge of human choices, did exist in Carolingian literature between the years 740 and 840. But it also provided evidence that theology extolling the free and sovereign grace of God in salvation from start to finish abounded in that time as well. This part will focus more specifically on predestination in the century before Gottschalk, and show that predestination was not a 'lost' doctrine, rarely discussed or affirmed in the Dark Ages, only to be revived by Gottschalk in the ninth century. On the contrary, predestination as a divine decree that prepares and ensures the salvation of the elect (not simply foresees their free choices) was often mentioned. Some said that such concept of predestination was an apostolic doctrine that should be held by all of the faithful, and others even spoke of predestination to punishment, a thought repudiated by all so-called Semi-Pelagians. These sentiments will be shown through writings associated with a predestination controversy in Spain in which Pope Hadrian of Rome (reigned 772-795) became involved, in literature associated with the Adoptionist controversy, in Apocalypse commentaries of the time, in hagiographies, and in the biblical commentaries of Alcuin.

1. Pope Hadrian and a Spanish Predestination Controversy

In the late eighth century a debate on predestination broke out in Spain. The chief characters in the controversy were Elipandus of Toledo representing the predestinarians and Migetius leader of the non-predestinarians. News of the controversy reached Rome and Pope Hadrian wrote a letter addressing the problem. Migetius taught in the region of Baetica in Spain, and through correspondence was confronted by Elipandus, bishop of Toledo, about various errors. According to Elipandus, Migetius erred on the doctrine of the Trinity, insisted upon a Donatist-like purity of priests, made rules forbidding Christians to eat with Muslims, was mistaken about the date of Easter, and believed that Rome was the New Jerusalem mentioned in the Apocalypse. About 782, a council in Seville treated his errors, but Migetius did not correct himself nor did the council have

the effect of eradicating Migetius' followers from those regions.¹ Up to this point, predestination does not seem to have been part of their conflict. The controversy over predestination may have been sparked by the statement in the final lines of Elipandus' letter to Migetius, which said that the knowledge of the Trinity is revealed to all the people who have been 'predestined to life.'² Migetius perhaps took issue with the strong predestinarianism prevalent in the sees of Toledo and Seville, and revealed in Elipandus' statement. Migetius and his followers seem to have held an anti-predestinarian synergistic soteriology similar to that of John Cassian (d. 435) of Semi-Pelagian infamy. For, in a letter from the Spanish bishops to the bishops of France dated 792-793, Migetius is referred to as the teacher 'Casianorum' (of the Casianists).³ And, a council in Cordoba in 839, described followers of Migetius and his associate Egila as 'Casiani,' 'Casianistas,' and those 'nomine Cassinorum.'⁴ According to historical theologian, Robert F. Rea, John Cassian's teaching 'undercuts the entire theology of divine predestination' and 'decries the predestination by divine decree doctrine taught by Augustine.'⁵ This seems to have been the view of Migetius and his party. Pope Hadrian describes the 'free will' side of the controversy as having asked: 'Why do we ask God that we may not be overcome by temptation, because it is in our power, as if in the freedom of the will?'⁶ According to historian of Spanish heresies, Marcelino Menendez, this faction of the eighth century predestination controversy in Baetica "exaggerated free will in a Pelagian manner."⁷

Elipandus, on the other hand, taught predestination. Correcting Migetius' faulty view of the New Jerusalem, Elipandus wrote: 'Jerusalem is interpreted "vision of peace." What else is the vision of peace...except the open acknowledgment of faith in the holy Trinity by all the Gentiles predestined to life?'⁸ In a letter to Charlemagne, Elipandus mentioned the work of Christ on behalf of his elect, writing: 'For you he extended his innocent hands on the cross; for you he shed his precious blood; for you he endured death

¹ Elipandus of Toledo, *Ad Migetium*. In Ioannes Gil, ed., *Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabicorum* [=CSM], Vol. 1 (Madrid: Instituto "Antonio de Nebrija," 1973), 68-78; PL 96:859-67; Elipandus, *Ad Fidelem*. CSM 1:80-81; PL 96:918-9.

² Elipandus, *Ad Migetium*, 13. CSM 1:78; PL 96:867.

³ MGH, Legum Sectio III. Concilia. Tomi II. Pars I:110-119 at 118, line 36

⁴ *Concilium Cordubense*. CSM 1:135-41. Other reasons for the adoption of these names besides association with the soteriology of John Cassian have been put forth. Joan. Bapt. Enhueber, "Dissertatio Dogmatico-Historica de Haeresi Elipandi et Felicis," (PL 101:337-438 at 357) said that the name has reference to Migetius' Donatist tendencies. Donatus, was a fourth century schismatic bishop of Casis nigra in North Africa, whose followers advocated rigid separatism based upon their claim of the moral superiority of their clergy. P. B. Gams, *Kirchengeschichte von Spanien* (Regensburg: Joseph Manz, 1894), 314-5, suggested that 'Casianorum' is a reference to a place name, giving as evidence a church constructed near Seville and dedicated to a martyr named Casianus.

⁵ Robert F. Rea, "Grace and Free Will in John Cassian," Ph.D. diss. (Saint Louis University, 1990), 202, 205.

⁶ Pope Hadrian, *Letter 95 to Spanish bishops*. MGH, Epist. 3:642: *Ut quid rogamus Deum, ne vincamus temptationem [sic], quod in nostra est potestate, quasi libertate arbitrii?* For a fuller treatment of this Spanish predestination controversy, see my unpublished paper "Pope Hadrian I and a Spanish Predestination Controversy" (April 2002).

⁷ Don Marcelino Menendez Pelayo, *Historia de los Heterodoxos Españoles*, Vol. 1 (Madrid: Librería Católica de San José, 1880), 270: *...exagerando unos el libre albedrío á la manera pelagiana...*

⁸ Elipandus, *Ad Migetium*. PL 96:867: *Jerusalem via pacis interpretatur, quid est aliud pacis visio...nisi sanctae Trinitatis fidei omnibus gentibus ad vitam praedestinatis aperta cognitio...*

and burial; he descended to hell for the purpose of freeing the elect; and rising for you he showed you the way of returning to heaven, that is, to the heavenly country.’⁹ The view of the predestinarian faction, led by Elipandus, was described in Pope Hadrian’s letter as a form of double predestinarianism holding ‘that predestination to life or to death is in the power of God and not in ours.’¹⁰

Pope Hadrian entered the controversy by way of a bishop named Egila, who was ordained sometime after the year 780 by Wilchard, archbishop of Sens in France. With the approval of Pope Hadrian, Egila was sent to Spain as an emissary to bring Spanish Catholics into conformity with the Roman Church concerning the date of Easter, the Saturday fast, and other ecclesiastical practices. Hadrian kept abreast of Egila’s progress, and a report came to his ears that Egila was not preaching correctly, ‘but following the errors of a certain teacher of his, Mingentius [sic],’ and that a debate on predestination was taking place in Spain.¹¹ In *Letter 95 to the Spanish Bishops* written in the year 786, Pope Hadrian wrote that the main problem in their controversy regarding predestination was ignorance of the works of Fulgentius on the subject. The papal solution was to provide Fulgentius’ teachings on predestination; and in doing this he cited from a lost work of that African bishop. Regarding ‘the eternal predestination of the future works of God,’ Hadrian wrote, quoting Fulgentius, ‘we have always acknowledged to be taught to us by apostolic doctrine, and which we thus faithfully preach. For, clearly and frequently blessed Paul makes known the predestination of those whom God saves by grace.’¹² After citing Romans 8:29-30, Hadrian continues that ‘nothing of his predestination is ineffectual,’ since ‘God begins his work of predestination in calling, and completes it in glorifying.’¹³ Therefore, ‘the truth of predestination must be held by all of the faithful.’¹⁴

Three years earlier, in 783, Pope Hadrian wrote to Charlemagne and expressed with these words his belief that the Frankish king’s power had been foreordained by God: ‘Without doubt we believe that your regal authority, supremely protected by God, was divinely foreordained.’¹⁵ And, in a later letter addressed to Charlemagne, dated sometime between 784 and 791, Pope Hadrian expressed his belief that he himself was predestined and divinely chosen to his office. He wrote:

⁹ Elipandus, *Ad Carolum Magnum*. PL 96:868: *...pro te in crucem manus innoxias extendit, et pro te sanguinem pretiosum effudi, et pro te mortem pertulit et sepulcrum et ad liberandos electos ad infernum descendit, et pro te resurgens tibi viam ad coelos revertendi, scilicet ad coelestiem patriam, demonstravit...*

¹⁰ Pope Hadrian, *Letter 95*. MGH, Epist. 3:642: *alii ex ipsis dicunt, quod predistinctio [sic] ad vitam sive ad mortem in Dei sit potestate et non nostra.*

¹¹ Pope Hadrian, *Letter 95*. MGH, Epist. 3:637: *quod peius est, ut eius fama in auribus nostris sonuit— non recte illa Egila predicat; sed erroribus quidam Mingentii magistri sui sequens, extra catholicam disciplinam.*

¹² Pope Hadrian, *Letter 95*. MGH, Epist. 3:642: *Haec est aeterna predistinctio futurorum operum Dei, quam, sicut nobis apostolica doctrina semper insinuari cognoscimus, sic etiam fiducialiter predicamus.*

Pope Hadrian’s letter is the source of four fragments of a lost work of Fulgentius of Ruspe written to Eugippius against a sermon of a certain Pelagian. The fragments are edited in CCSL 91A:870-3, and are translated into English in my dissertation “Fulgentius of Ruspe on the Saving Will of God,” (Saint Louis University, 2004), 191-6.

¹³ Pope Hadrian, *Letter 95*. MGH, Epist. 3:642: *Nihil suae predistinctionis evacuat; predistinctionis igitur sua opera vocatione Deus inchoat, glorificatione consummat.*

¹⁴ Pope Hadrian, *Letter 95*. MGH, Epist. 3:642: *Teneatur ergo predistinctionis veritas a fidelibus cunctis.*

¹⁵ Pope Hadrian, *Letter 74 ad Domnum Carolum Regem*. PL 98:353: *Divinus praeordinatam vestram a Deo protectam summam regalem potentiam procul dubio credimus...*

We for our part, who have, though unworthy, attained the apostolic see...were not chosen by men or through any man, but were called through Jesus Christ our Lord. We have been predestined in his gospel, as St Paul...has taught us: 'Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate. 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 [Romans 8:29-30].'¹⁶

These are the views of Pope Hadrian, who reigned as spiritual leader of Western Christendom for twenty three years of the late eighth century. Making Fulgentius' views his own, he stated that predestination was an apostolic doctrine that he faithfully preaches and that should be held by all of the faithful. Evidently, the Roman Church of the late eighth century was not dominated by Semi-Pelagian soteriology in which salvation is initiated through human free will. And clearly, the doctrine of predestination was not absent during the century before Gottschalk, as some scholars have intimated.

2. Predestination in the Adoptionist Controversy

The literature of the Adoptionist controversy contains additional evidence that Latin Christendom of the late eighth and early ninth centuries believed in predestination. This controversy centered around the question of whether Christ was "adopted" Son of God by the Father. Certain Spanish bishops held to an adoptive Sonship in Christ, while the French, who were aligned with Charlemagne, opposed the concept. Predestination was brought up peripherally in the debate, in that the adoptionists argued that Christ's predestination by the Father implied an adoptive Sonship.

The adoptionists claimed to have learned about Christ's predestination from both Paul who described Jesus as 'predestined the Son of God in power' (Rom. 1:4), and Augustine, whose thirtieth chapter of *On the Predestination of the Saints* declares that 'the most illustrious Light of predestination and grace is the Savior Himself.'¹⁷ The creed of the Council of Toledo in 675 also very clearly taught the predestination of Jesus: 'For inasmuch as he proceeded from the Father, he is not to be considered as creature nor as predestined; but inasmuch as he was born of the Virgin Mary, we must believe that he is not only born but is also a creature and predestined.'¹⁸

On predestination, Felix of Urgel (d. 818), one of the leading Spanish bishops accused of adoptionism, wrote that the Word of the Father, 'creating all things with the Father and Holy Spirit, is maker—giving life to those whom he wills just as the Father also does, electing with the Father whom he wills, predestining with the Father those whom he foreknows, and sanctifying, deifying, and glorifying those whom he wills.'¹⁹

¹⁶ "Pope Hadrian I to Charles the Great, 784-91." Translated in H. R. Loyn and John Percival, *The Reign of Charlemagne: Documents on Carolingian Government and Administration* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 133-4. The authors listed the source of the letter as *Codex Corolinus* 92.

¹⁷ Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 30. NPNF, 1st series, 5:512. Cf. "Divine Predestination and Jesus Christ," chapter six of Gerald Bonner's, *Freedom and Necessity: St. Augustine's Teaching on Divine Power and Human Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 97-117; D. Ogliari, *Gratia et Certamen: The Relationship Between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called Semipelagians* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 355-7.

¹⁸ John F. Clarkson, John H. Edwards, William J. Kelly, and John J. Welch, eds., *The Church Teaches: Documents of the Church in English Translation* (Rockford, Illinois: Tan, 1973), 186.

¹⁹ Recorded in Agobard of Lyons, *Against the Dogma of Felix*, 28. PL 104:56: *creans omnia cum Patre et Spiritu sancto, factor, vivificans quos vult, sicut et Pater, eligens cum Patre quos vult, praedestinans cum Patre quos praescit, sanctificans, deificans, glorificans quos vult.*

The problem was that Felix also reasoned that just as believers are adopted as children of God through grace, election, and predestination, so also the Son of God was adopted.²⁰

Agobard of Lyons, a bishop writing after Felix's death, explained that Felix

establishes and concludes with the apostolic testimony saying, *He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, who predestined us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ in him* (Eph. 1:4), as if the Apostle were saying: God chose us in Christ when he chose him; in him he predestined us through him unto adoption as children when he predestined him unto adoption as Son, so that he is the adopted Son according to his humanity.²¹

Another bishop, Paul of Aquileia, writing against Felix's view of an adoptive Sonship in Christ, indicates that Felix correlated Christ's predestination with adoption. Paul engaged with his opponent in these words: 'You say that he was predestined Son of God. How, expressly, I pray? Declare! Perhaps through adoption? May it never be!'²²

What is striking is that opponents of adoptionism did not have a problem with a belief in the predestination of Christ or the predestination of Christ's members. They simply objected to what Felix had drawn from this truth, i.e. the adoptive Sonship of Christ, because it implied that there were two Sons, a natural Son of God and an adoptive Son; and that, of course, is Nestorianism. A letter of Eterius of Osma and Beatus of Liebana, opposing the adoptionist views of Elipandus, illustrates this as well. In it Eterius and Beatus affirm divine election in the case of the apostles and the adopted children of God, but deny the adoption of the One electing. They wrote:

And just as the sun makes twelve hours of day and they do not make the sun, so also Christ made and chose twelve apostles, and the twelve apostles did not make or choose Christ, as the Lord himself says: *You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you* (John 15:16). Now truly those who have been chosen are adopted children, not the One who chose.²³

To the abbot of Anianus named Benedict, who disputed with Felix over the latter's view of Christ's adoption, the issue was also not predestination *per se*. Elaborating on Romans 1:4, the *locus classicus* on Christ's predestination, Benedict argues against the Lord's divinity being predestined, an error which he believed Felix was teaching:

For, what is predestined is foreordained before it comes to be. But divinity is unable to be predestined because it is known to be eternal. Moreover, the Son of God was predestined in power, not divinity, but according to what *was made from the seed of David according to the flesh*, according to what God the Father *had promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures about his Son*

²⁰ Agobard, *Against the Dogma of Felix*, 18. PL 104:44.

²¹ Agobard, *Against the Dogma of Felix*, 37. PL 104:64: *testimonio apostolico confirmat et concludit dicens: Qui electi nos in ipso ante mundi constitutionem, qui praedestinavit nos in adoptionem filiorum per Jesum Christum in ipso (Eph. 1:4). Quasi Apostolus diceret: Deus in Christo nose legit, quando illum eligit; in ipso nos per ipsum praedestinavit in adoptionem filiorum, quando et illum praedestinavit in adoptionem filii, ut esset secundum humanitatem adoptivus filius.*

²² Paul of Aquileia, *Against Felix of Urgel*, 2.1. PL 99:418: *Praedestinatus est, ais, Filius Dei. Per quod, expressius, oro, declara. Forte per adoptione? Absit!*

²³ Eterius of Osma and Beatus of Liebana, *Adversus Elipandum*, 2.34. Bengt Löfstedt, ed. CCCM 59:128. PL 96:998.

(Rom. 1:2-3), *whom he constituted heir over all things through whom he also made the worlds* (Heb. 1:2).²⁴

Benedict did not have a problem with predestination. He explained what predestination is, and affirmed the predestination of Christ. However, he denounced the idea that the Son's divinity was predestined.

Through the preserved literature related to the Adoptionist controversy of the late eighth and early ninth century, one sees that from Spain to the Adriatic coast of Aquileia, including the French regions between them, theologians and leaders in Western Christendom believed in the predestination of Christ and the predestination of his body, the elect. This is more evidence that predestination was not a lost doctrine that was not discussed between Orange and the Gottschalk controversy.

3. *Predestination in Apocalypse Commentaries*

Several commentaries on the Apocalypse from the late eighth century also attest to the widespread belief in divine predestination. Ambrose Autpert wrote a commentary on the last book of the Bible about 778. On Revelation 5:10, which says, *And you have made us a kingdom and priests to our God, and we have reigned upon the earth*, Ambrose mentioned God's election by grace: 'This is surely that type of kingdom made up of the entire church, the royal priesthood which is described by the apostle Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9). Of course, in this type of kingdom all are called kings by grace, and all elected by grace are called priests.'²⁵

Autpert affirmed God's predestination of the elect in greater detail when commenting upon Revelation 20:15 and the book of life. He explained:

Truly, it should be known that when it is said: *Whoever was not found written in the book of life*, it is as if it were said 'whoever has not been predestined to life.' For, that book should not be understood carnally, as containing the names of the righteous in ink or some other substance, or in such a way that it gives information to God, so that in case he forgets that information, reading it will recall it to his memory. Rather, it signifies the predestination of those to whom eternal life will be given. Therefore, by no means does God not know and recognize them, as was said, as if he reads a book so that he may gain knowledge. But rather, the book is that foreknowledge of his, yea, even their predestination, which is not able to fail. In this book, the elect were written before the ages, that is, were foreknown and predestined.

Accordingly also, the Apostle says: *Those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to his image, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. But those whom he foreknew and predestined, those he also called; and those whom he called, those he also justified; and those whom he justified, those he also glorified* (Rom. 8:29-30).

²⁴ Benedict of Anianus, *Disputation Against the Impiety of Felix*. PL 103:1403: *Nam quod praedestiniatur, antequam sit in re praeordinatur. Divinitas vero praedestinari nequit, quia sempiterna esse dignoscitur. Praedestinatus est autem Filius Dei in virtute, non divinitate, sed secundum quod factus est ex simine David secundum carnem, secundum quod antea Deus Pater promiserat per prophetas suos in Scripturas sanctis de Filio suo, quem constituit haeredem universorum, per quem fecit et saecula.*

²⁵ Ambrose Autpert, *Expositio in Apocalypsin*. On Rev. 5:10. CCCM 27:267: *Hoc est certe illud totius Ecclesiae genus regium, regale sacerdotium, quod per Apostolum Petrum describitur. In quo videlicet genere regio, regalique sacerdotio omnes per gratiam reges, omnes per gratiam electi sacerdotes vocantur.*

And on this again he says: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy and blameless before him in love, who predestined us unto adoption as children through Jesus Christ in him, according to the purpose of his will unto the praise of the glory of his grace* (Eph. 1:3-6).

On this again he says: *According to the good pleasure of God which he purposed in him, in the dispensation of the fullness of times to restore all things in Christ which are in heaven and which are on earth in him; in which lot also we have been called, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, that we may be unto the praise of his glory* (Eph. 1:9-12).²⁶

According to Autpert, the book of life represents God's predestination of the elect to eternal life, a predestination that is unable to fail. This early medieval author supported his interpretation with three passages from the Pauline epistles which teach divine election.

On Revelation 20:3, which speaks of Satan being no longer able to deceive the nations, both Autpert and another Apocalypse commentator, Beatus of Liebiana, viewed the 'nations' (Lat. *gentes*) as a synecdochic figure of speech, in which a term designating a whole, is used only for a part. Both commentators saw the broad term 'nations' as referring exclusively to the elect among the nations, the people who are unable to finally be deceived by the great serpent. Autpert writes:

By the term *nations*, according to the custom of scripture, the part that is not able to be deceived should be understood from the whole...May it never be believed that the deception of those nations [which are not able to be deceived] is understood. For, those nations, from which the whole church exists and which God chose in Christ *before the foundation of the world* (Eph. 1:4), also which he predestined to *rip from the power of darkness and transfer into the kingdom of his beloved Son* (Col. 1:13), will never be deceived unto eternal death by him.²⁷

On this passage, Beatus commented that the angel prohibits the devil from deceiving the nations, and then immediately defined those *gentes* as those 'which have been destined unto life.'²⁸ For this synecdochic interpretation of Rev 20:3, Autpert and Beatus were probably dependent upon Augustine's *City of God* (20:15), or earlier commentators on the Apocalypse like Primasius of Hadrumetum, Caesarius of Arles, or the Venerable Bede.²⁹

The certain and definite number of the predestined is also affirmed in an Apocalypse commentary once attributed to Alcuin, but now categorized under his

²⁶ Ambrose Autpert, *Expositio in Apocalypsin*. On Rev. 20:15. CCCM 27A:774-5.

²⁷ Ambrose Autpert, *Expositio in Apocalypsin*. On Rev. 20:3. CCCM 27A:745: *In uno gentium vocabulo, iuxta consuetudinem Scripturarum, a toto pars intellegenda sit quae non potest seduci...earundem gentium seduction intellegenda erit, absit ut credatur. Numquam enim ad aeternam mortem ab illo seducentur illae gentae, ex quibus tota constat Ecclesia, quasque ante mundi constitutionem Deus elegit in Christo, quas etiam praedestinavit eripere de potestate tenebrarum et transferre in regnum Filii dilectionis suae.*

²⁸ Beatus of Liebiana, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*. On Rev. 20:3. E. Romero-Pose, ed. *Sancti Beati a Liebana Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, Vol. Alterum (Rome: Typis Officinae Polygraphicae, 1985), 346.

²⁹ For the possible sources of this interpretation, see the apparati in the critical editions of Ambrose Autpert and Beatus on this passage.

dubious works. The comments on Revelation 2:15 speak of ‘the elect, predestined to life in the heavenly city.’³⁰ Its author shortly thereafter elaborated on the issue of predestination in his comments upon Revelation 3:5—*And I shall not remove his name from the book of life*. He started by saying that ‘on this passage a huge question arises for us.’³¹ The question relates to an elect person supposedly being removed from the book of life. The author answers the question by affirming that the book of life ‘is the particular divine decree, which before the world predestined a certain and definite number of the elect unto future glory.’ For that reason, he recommended that his readers understand that it is ‘the names of the reprobate,’ not of the elect, which will be deleted from the book of life.³²

From the Apocalypse commentaries written in the century before Gottschalk, it is evident that belief in God’s predestination was not absent. Furthermore, this was not a concept of predestination defined simply as foreknowledge of those who will choose Christ of their own free will, as the Semi-Pelagians held. Rather, predestination referred to a divine decree that is not able to fail in its granting of eternal life to God’s elect among the nations. These writings, therefore, seriously challenge the statements of some contemporary writers that would have us believe that predestination was not discussed in the century before Gottschalk, and that this time was characterized by Semi-Pelagianism.

4. *Predestination in Hagiography*

Hagiography is that genre of literature in which the life and deeds of a saintly person is narrated by one of that saint’s admirers. Three examples from this literature in the century before Gottschalk reveal belief in predestination. The first is from *The Life of Saint Guthlac*, written about 745 by a person named Felix. Felix described Guthlac’s entrance into hermetic life at Crowland at the age of 26 as coming about through divine providence and predestination. Felix then compares Guthlac with Paul who was predestined to be an apostle to the Gentiles. He wrote:

He [Guthlac] finished his journey and reached Crowland on 25 August, the day on which it is usual to celebrate the feast of St Bartholomew with whose help, under divine providence, he had made a beginning of his dwelling in the desert. He was then about twenty-six years of age, when he determined with heavenly aid to be a soldier of the true God amid the gloomy thickets of that remote desert....O how marvelous is the kindness of the divine mercy and how glorious the providence of the Father’s love, how praiseworthy the predestination of the eternal Deity, how inscrutable the judgements [sic] of the everlasting Judge, as the apostle declares: ‘How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!’ For just as with a heavenly voice He brought forth, out of the gloomy mist of the error of the Jews, the supreme teacher of the Gentiles when on his way to Damascus—him whom He had predestined before all worlds to preach the Gospel of His Son; so

³⁰ pseudo-Alcuin, *Commentariorum in Apocalypsin libri quinque*. On Rev. 2:15. PL 100:1106: *Datio hic illa accipienda est, qua praedestinos ad vitam supernae civitatis novimus electos.*

³¹ pseudo-Alcuin, *Commentariorum in Apocalypsin libri quinque*. On Rev. 3:5. PL 100:1110: *Magna nobis hoc loco oritur quaestio.*

³² pseudo-Alcuin, *Commentariorum in Apocalypsin libri quinque*. On Rev. 3:5. PL 100:1110-1: *Restat itaque ut secundum usitateam sacrae Scripturae locutionem intelligamus reproborum nomina de libro vitae deleri...Liber autem iste est vis quaedam divina, quae electorum numerum certum ac definitum ante saecula praedestinavit in gloria futurum.*

also He led Guthlac a man of saintly memory from the eddying whirlpool of these turbid times...to the straight path and to the vision of true light. And not only did He reward him with fame and veneration in this present world, but He also established him in the joy and eternal blessedness of perennial glory, as apostolic truth foretold: ‘Whom He did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he also called, them he glorified.’³³

In that account, Felix praised God for his providence and predestination, and affirmed the Apostle Paul’s predestination as well as that of Guthlac. A bishop of Westphalia named Lugderus (d. 809) also spoke of predestination in his *Life of Saint Gregory*. The Gregory commemorated in this treatise was an abbot of Utrech who flourished in the late eighth century. On Gregory’s death, Lugderus wrote: ‘The last day of this mortal life came to him, having been predestined for entrance into the kingdom and for perpetual salvation.’³⁴

A bishop of Basel named Hetto about 824 wrote a *Booklet on the Vision and Death of Wetinus*. Wetinus was a monk of Augiensis in Alamannia. Hetto related that Wetinus was once informed by his guardian angel that although a certain prince of Italy was physically deformed, that prince ‘was predestined to life in the lot of the elect.’³⁵

These examples from hagiographies show that bishops in the German areas of Europe also believed in God’s predestination of the elect in the century preceding Gottschalk. Predestination in this time was not a teaching lost in Semi-Pelagian darkness after the sixth-century, only to appear again in the mid-ninth century. Rather, the recognition of God’s eternal decree, predestinating the elect to glory, was on the minds and pens of many.

5. *Predestination in the Biblical Commentaries of Alcuin*

Alcuin, as mentioned in Part I of this series, was a leading theologian in Charlemagne’s government. In his scripture commentaries, he wrote and taught about predestination as if it were the accepted teaching in the church. In his *Questions and Answers in Genesis*, the third question and answer reads: ‘Why is there silence in Genesis about the sin of the angels, but revelation about the sin of man? Answer: Because God did not predestine to cure the wound of the angels, but did predestine to heal the wound of man.’³⁶ Far from some Semi-Pelagian concept of predestination, which is based on divine foreknowledge of free human choices, predestination for Alcuin is a divine decree of what God intended to happen with respect to the healing of humankind from sin.

In his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Alcuin wrote about predestination when explaining John 12:32. On this passage, in which Jesus says, *And if I shall be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all to myself*, Alcuin gave three interpretations of ‘all’ (Lat. *omnia*). One is that it refers to the whole person—body, soul, and spirit. Another is that

³³ Bertram Colgrave, ed. and trans., *Life of Saint Guthlac by Felix* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1956, 1985), 91-3.

³⁴ Lugderus, *Vita Sancti Gregorii*. PL 99:968: *venit ei dies extremus mortalitatis hujus, ad ingressum regni et perpetuae salutis praedestinatus.*

³⁵ Hetto Basilensis, *Libellus de visione et obitu Wetini*. PL 105:775: *Qui tamen, inquit, in sorte electorum ad vitam praedestinatus est.*

³⁶ Alcuin, *Interrogationes et responsiones in Genesin*. Question 3. PL 100:517: *Inter. 3. Quare angelicum peccatum silentio in Genesi absconditum est et hominis petefactum? Resp. Quia angelicum vulnus Deus non praedestinavit curare, hominis vero sanare praedestinavit.*

it means all kinds of people. A third view he gave is: ‘Or, if *all* is to be understood as people, we are able to say all predestined to salvation. About these *all*, when he [Jesus] spoke above about his sheep, he said that none would be lost (cf. John 10:28).³⁷ Here Alcuin makes a distinction between all people in general and those predestined to salvation, of which none would be lost.

On John 17:9—*I ask for them; I do not ask for the world, but for those whom you gave me*—Alcuin explained: ‘For, he said these things, among others, while he was praying for those whom the Father gave to him. He wants the “world” to be understood in this manner, as those who live according to the desire of the world, as they are not in that lot of grace that are chosen by him out of the world.’³⁸ Here Alcuin makes a distinction between the unsaved world and those chosen by grace out of the world.

On the next verse in that same gospel, which says *I was glorified in them* (John 17:10), Alcuin clarified the Lord’s words, writing: ‘I was glorified through their preaching into the whole world. And because it was predestined to happen, he wanted them to be assured that it would happen. That is why he used the verb in the past tense.’³⁹

Alcuin, an influential theologian in the century before Gottschalk, wrote about predestination in his commentaries on both Genesis and John. For him, the healing through Christ of the wound that Adam inflicted on mankind was predestined; the preaching of the gospel by the apostles was predestined; and Christ’s sheep, those chosen by him out of the world, were predestined to salvation. This is more evidence that in the century before Gottschalk, God’s predestination was preached and taught.

6. *Predestination of Punishment for the Wicked and of the Wicked for Punishment*

Besides belief in divine predestination to salvation for the elect, I found two examples in the century before Gottschalk of influential religious writers discoursing about the predestination of the wicked to punishment. This is significant because in the mid-ninth century, the silencing of Gottschalk was largely due to his teaching on divine predestination of the reprobate to punishment. In his aforementioned letter from the year 786 to Spanish bishops, Pope Hadrian wrote that the punishment of the wicked was predestined by God, and that the wicked were predestined for punishment. Nevertheless, the bishop of Rome clarified that God did not prepare the evil works of the wicked, but only their punishments. Hadrian, quoting from Fulgentius’ lost work to Eugippius, explained: ‘Indeed, for the wicked he [God] has not prepared evil wills or evil works, but he has prepared for them just and eternal punishments.’⁴⁰ And a little later Hadrian wrote

³⁷ Alcuin, *Commentaria in sanctis Johannis evangelium*. On John 12:32: *Aut si omnia ipsi homines intelligendi sunt, omnia praedestinata ad salutem possumus dicere: ex quibus omnibus, ait, nihil esse periturum, cum supra de suis ovibus loqueretur (Joan. X,28).*

³⁸ Alcuin, *Commentaria in sanctis Johannis evangelium*. On John 17:9: *Haec enim dixit inter alia, dum oraret pro eis, quos dedit ei Pater. Mundum vult modo intelligi, qui vivunt secundum concupiscentiam mundi, et non sunt in ea sorte gratiae ut ab illo eligantur ex mundo.*

³⁹ Alcuin, *Commentaria in sanctis Johannis evangelium*. On John 17:10: *Per eorum praedicationem clarificatus sum in toto mundo. Et quia praedestinatum est ut fieret, certum voluit esse quod futurum erat. Ideo praeteriti temporis verbo usus est.*

⁴⁰ Pope Hadrian, *Letter 95*. MGH, Epist. 3:642: *Malis vero non preparavit voluntates malas aut opera mala, sed preparavit eis iusta et eternal supplicia.*

of the punishment ‘which is known in God’s predestined preparation of it.’⁴¹ The bishop elucidated:

For this reason the blessed apostle Jude speaks about those predestined unto judgment with these words: *For, certain ungodly persons have entered in, persons who once had been foreordained and predestined unto this judgment of our God* (Jude 4). However, he vigilantly does not say in the teaching of the Holy Spirit that the ungodly persons were predestined to sin, but to judgment—that is, not to impiety, but to punishment. For, they have not been predestined to what wicked impieties perpetrate, but to what they receive by the judgment of divine equity.⁴²

About a decade later, Paul of Aquileia, the patriarch of that city on the Adriatic coast, also mentioned that God predestined people to punishment. In Chapter 56 of his *Book of Exhortation*, written about 795, he commented briefly upon Psalm 32. On the phrase which says, *And you forgave the impiety of my heart* (Ps. 32:5), Paul wrote: ‘God is always prepared to pardon our sins, if we are not slow in returning to him. For, if we are slow, we should fear lest it bring upon us his wrath, since he indeed predestined some to punishment and indeed he exhibited great kindness to others. Nevertheless, this is not done unjustly, but pertains to his highest judgment.’⁴³

From these two authors, it can be seen that not only predestination of the elect was believed and held by certain eminent late eighth century leaders in Western Christendom, but also God’s decree included predestination of some to punishment. However, both authors were dutiful to explain that predestination of the wicked to punishment is in accordance with God’s justice, and that it is not to be confused with the error which says that God predestined people to commit evil.

II. Gottschalk: An Alternative View

If God’s predestination was believed upon so widely in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, the question arises as to why Gottschalk did not cite these predestinarian predecessors for support. The answer probably lies in whom Gottschalk regarded as ‘authorities.’ It is very likely that he regarded Augustine, Gregory the Great, and the others from centuries past, whom he very often cited, as more authoritative than recent ecclesiastical writers, older being regarded as better when attempting to prove his orthodoxy.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Pope Hadrian, *Letter 95*. MGH, Epist. 3:642: *...poenam, quae ideo in Dei preparatione predestinata [sic] cognoscitur...*

⁴² Pope Hadrian, *Letter 95*. MGH, Epist. 3:642: *Propter quod beatus Iudas apostolus quosdam predestinatos dicit in iudicium his verbis: ‘Subintroierunt enim quidam homines impii, qui olim prescripti et predestinati errant in hoc iudicium Dei nostri’—vigilanter autem in doctrina spiritus sancti predestinatos impios non dicit ad peccatum, sed ad iudicium, id est non ad impietatem, sed ad punitionem; non enim predestinati sunt ad hoc, quod vitiosae impietates admittunt, sed ad illud, quod iudicio equitatis divine recipiunt.*

⁴³ Paul of Aquileia, *Liber Exhortationis*, 56. *Paratus est semper Deus peccata nostra indulgere, si non tardaverimus ad eum reverti. Si enim tardaverimus, timeamus ne inferat nobis iram suam, quia quosdam quidem praedestinavit ad supplicium, et quibusdam quidem magnum praestitit beneficium: nec tamen hoc injuste, sed in alto suo iudicio.*

⁴⁴ As Hincmar said (*De Praedestinatione*, 35. PL 125:381): *Neque enim numerus testimoniorum, sed auctoritas valet.* ‘For, it is not the number of the testimonies but their authority that counts.’ Cf. Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 3:95. Gottschalk did mention Alcuin once in a grammatical treatise, where he referred

This article has challenged the viewpoint that the religious climate previous to Gottschalk was dominated by Semi-Pelagianism and virtually absent of any witness for God's sovereignty in human salvation. It also calls for re-examination of the portrayal of this wandering monk as an anomaly, a preacher of predestination at a time when Western Christendom had traded its birthright of grace for the porridge of free will. To be sure, a soteriology which emphasized human freedom's role and defined predestination as God's foreknowledge of future human choices does exist in the literature written in the century preceding Gottschalk. This was shown in Part I of this series. But the literary monuments of that era also reveal a theology of salvation with emphasis on God's sovereignty and electing grace.

Alcuin of York, Agobard of Lyons, and Ambrose Autpert, all eminent church leaders, preached and advocated an 'all of grace' doctrine of salvation: Free will is bound in sin. Faith is a gift of God. Any movement of free will toward good is inspired by preceding enabling grace. Subsequent good works are done only as enabled through grace. Perseverance in righteous living to the end, resulting in eternal salvation, is also a product of divine grace. Furthermore, this grace is particular in its application, dependent upon divine predestination and election.

In the century before Gottschalk, talk of predestination and election was neither absent nor muffled. Rather, predestinarian language resounded in sermons, doctrinal treatises, polemical writing, papal correspondence, hagiography, and biblical commentaries. Such affirmations of predestination were not confined to one corner of the Latin speaking West either; they sprang from Spain, Italy, France, and Germany. Citations from authors of Christian literature springing from the Latin speaking West in the century before Gottschalk have demonstrated this.

What then, does this suggest about Gottschalk's relationship to his religious context, and about his role in the history of Christian thought? First, it can be reasonably concluded that predestination was not a doctrine that had been lost in the early middle ages only to experience a brief revival with Gottschalk in the mid-ninth century. Secondly, it significantly diminishes the perception of Gottschalk as a solitary voice in a medieval wilderness.

The literature examined in this article suggests that by 840, the year in which Rabanus Maurus first wrote against Gottschalk's views, predestination had been a topic of debate in theological circles of the Latin West for about seventy years. Assuming that Ambrose Autpert was addressing a real situation, conflict over the roles of divine grace and human freedom ensued in Italy in the 770s when he wrote his Apocalypse commentary. As evident in two sections of his commentary, the advocates of free will

to him as a 'holy and learned man.' Cyrille Lambot, *Oeuvres théologiques et grammaticales de Godescalc d'Orbais* (Louvain: "Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense" Bureaux, 1945), 388: *Alcuinus etiam veluti debuit vir sanctus et doctus...* But, according to Jonathan Rainbow ("Redemptor Ecclesiae, Redemptor Mundi: An Historical and Theological Study of John Calvin's Doctrine of the Extent of Redemption," Ph.D. diss [Santa Barbara, CA: University of California, 1986], 68), the 'large issue of patristic authority was implicit in the entire [ninth-century predestination] debate in an unprecedented way.' In Gottschalk's *Excerpta de Trinitate* and *De Trinitate* he quoted from Alcuin's *De fide Trinitatis libri tres*, but without acknowledgment. Lambot, 108-130, 245. For this later information I am indebted to Donald A. Bullough, "Alcuin and the Kingdom of Heaven: Liturgy, Theology, and the Carolingian Age," in Uta-Renate Blumenthal, ed., *Carolingian Essays* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1983), 1-70 at 26-7, note 55.

were using Roman 7:18 to teach that in salvation it was for humans to choose and for God to complete. Ambrose, taking an opposing view, tried to show that even a person's willingness is a result of a preceding divine gift, and therefore, salvation is wholly of grace.

Letter 95 of Pope Hadrian gives evidence of a controversy in Spain in the 780s between predestinarians and some exalting the role of free will in salvation. While the pope's letter does not address the parties by name, other literature of the time points to Elipandus of Toledo as leader of the predestinarian view. In this he was following in the tradition of earlier bishops of that see.⁴⁵ The 'free will' party seems to have been led by Migetius whose followers were called Cassianists, probably because their view of grace and free will resembled that of the fifth-century Semi-Pelagian, John Cassian. That the Gottschalk controversy, which technically erupted in the 840s, was really an extension of a long controversy stretching back a number of decades to the Spanish predestination controversy, is only hinted at in the scholarship on Gottschalk. The only mention of this that I have found in the secondary literature is in a 1964 book entitled *Predestination, Grace, and Free Will* by Dom M. John Farrelly. Referring to Pope Hadrian's *Letter 95* and the Spanish predestinarians, Farrelly suggested: 'Perhaps this...eighth century recurrence of predestinationism had some influence on the ninth century monk Gottschalk...'⁴⁶ Farrelly was correct. For, the literature of the late eighth and early ninth centuries seems to support the view that the mid-ninth century Gottschalk controversy was an extension of earlier debate on matters related to predestination.

The pseudo-Alcuin Apocalypse commentary reveals that these issues continued to be discussed in the decades preceding the Gottschalk controversy. In its comments on the passage about someone's name being removed from the book of life (cf. Rev. 3:5), the author stated that a huge question arose. Since it was believed that the book of life was a metaphor for God's predestination, and the number of the elect was certain, the conflict centered on the alleged removal of an elect person from the book of life. It is likely that this *quaestio* was more than a personal mental exercise, but one that was permeating the theological air of the early ninth century. Holding to Alcuin's authorship of the commentary, Derk Visser, a scholar on medieval Apocalypse commentaries, seemed perplexed by the remark in the commentary (at Rev. 3:5), writing, 'Only Alcuin says: "A great problem has arisen among us on this subject," which is interesting as the polemics on predestination really originated after Alcuin's death.'⁴⁷ Discovery of debate on predestination during the lifetime of Alcuin and into the early decades of the ninth century, removes that enigma.

When in the 820s Smaragdus preached his sermon on the feast of the apostles, and commented that God delivered up the Son *for us all* (Rom 8:32), he referred to 'the error of predestination' which thinks that God gave his Son only 'for some.' This reveals that by the 820s those favoring free will were labeling their opposition 'the error of predestination.' The sides were becoming polarized. It also shows that the debate had

⁴⁵ Ildefonsus of Toledo (fl. 657-667), *Liber de cognitione baptismi*, 100. PL 96:148-9; *Liber de itinere deserti*, 74. PL 96:187; Julian of Toledo (fl. 680-690), *Prognosticon*, 3.39. CCSL 115:111; *Commentarius in Nahum prophetam*, 34. PL 96:723.

⁴⁶ Dom M. John Farrelly, *Predestination, Grace, and Free Will* (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1964), 109.

⁴⁷ Derk Visser, *Apocalypse as Utopian Expectation (800-1500): The Apocalypse Commentary of Berengaudus of Ferrières and the Relationship Between Exegesis, Liturgy and Iconography* (Liedien, New York, Köln: Brill, 1996), 49.

moved from discussion of the initial movement of the will toward God and of whether an elect person could be removed from the book of life, to the topic of the purpose and extent of Christ's atonement. The seeds of the famous 'three questions'—free will, predestination, and redemption—debated in detail during the Gottschalk controversy in the 850s, had already germinated and sprouted by the 820s.

In this decade (820s) Gottschalk studied at Fulda and Reichenau with fellow pupils Walafrid Strabo and Lupus of Ferrières.⁴⁸ There he would have become familiar with all of the theological debates of the day, and taken sides. In one of his grammatical treatises, Gottschalk related his disagreement with a statement of Smaragdus on foreknowledge and predestination, where the latter had stated 'very badly' that 'those whom he [God] foreknew from the beginning as good, he rewards as blessed with predestination.'⁴⁹ According to Gottschalk, Smaragdus taught this as if the elect 'became good of themselves' and as if 'the blessed are rewarded by God by reason of preceding merit.'⁵⁰ While the date of this grammatical treatise has not been established, it shows that Gottschalk was in theological disagreement on predestination with Smaragdus, who wrote in the 820s.

It was probably during this time that Strabo nicknamed Gottschalk 'Fulgentius.'⁵¹ Perhaps the young Gottschalk read Fulgentius of Ruspe's treatises on predestination and adopted his views so ardently that his schoolmate nicknamed him after that church father to whom he was so devoted.

Interestingly, when Charles the Bald called upon Lupus in the mid-ninth century to share his views on divine predestination, Lupus' views were very similar to Gottschalk's,⁵² perhaps evidence that in their formative years at Fulda, when responding to the debated issues of that day, Gottschalk and Lupus both had taken their stand for strict Augustinianism.

⁴⁸ Heide Estes, "Gottschalk of Orbais," in Jana K. Schulman, ed., *The Rise of the Medieval World 500-1300: A Biographical Dictionary* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 171; D.E. Nineham, "Gottschalk of Orbais: Reactionary or Precursor of the Reformation?" *JEH* 40:1 (Jan. 1989):1-18 at 2; G.R. Evans, "The Grammar of Predestination in the Ninth Century," *JTS*, New Series 33:1 (April 1982):134-45 at 134-5.

⁴⁹ Gottschalk of Orbais, *Opusculum II de rebus grammaticis*, 50. Lambot, 471. The statement of Smaragdus, from an unknown work by him, reads: *Ab origine quos praescivit bonos, praedestinatione reddit beatos.*

⁵⁰ Gottschalk, *Opusculum II de rebus grammaticis*, 50. Lambot, 471: *quasi videlicet electi proposito fiant quod absit a semetipsis boni et hoc suo gratiam dei praecedente merito reddantur a deo beati.*

⁵¹ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmann, 1910), 525; Augustus Neander, *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, Vol. 3. Joseph Torrey, trans. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1872), 473-4. However, M.L.W. Laistner, *The Intellectual Heritage of the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1957), 215, no. 49, sees in the nickname an allusion to Fulgentius the Mythographer. He writes: 'The nickname, Fulgentius, which Walafrid Strabo applied to Gottschalk (see, *MGH: Poet.* II, p. 362), has sometimes been regarded as an allusion to Gottschalk's part in the predestination controversy...But L. Traube (*MGH: Poet.* III, p. 708, note 2) is probably right in seeing in the nickname an allusion to the mythographer. As he says, not without a touch of humour, Gottschalk and Walafrid were friends in their boyhood (W.'s poem alludes to this), and the two were more likely to have read the *Mitologiae* together, than to have jointly ruminated over the doctrine of predestination at that tender age.'

⁵² Lupus of Ferrières, *Letter 78* in Graydon W. Regenos, trans., *The Letters of Lupus of Ferrières* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), 86-91; Dermot Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena: A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 28-9.

While Gottschalk in 829 was occupied at the Council of Mainz with trying to secure his release from monastic life, a council in Paris was discussing issues related to the ‘eternal security’ of the believer.⁵³ This shows once again that the issue of who will be saved and how they are saved were hot topics of the time, and that the disagreements were so significant that they needed to be addressed at a synod.

In 830, Agobard of Lyons warned against presuming on one’s own powers, even in part, for one’s salvation, probably alluding to those who were attributing their faith or the initial movements toward God to their free will. In addition, teaching that denied that personal faith and the movement of one’s free will was all of grace, he labeled doctrine of demons.

As for Gottschalk, in 830 he visited the monastery at Corbie, and spent a good portion of this decade at the monastery at Orbais.⁵⁴ Most scholars say that at these two monasteries Gottschalk devoted himself to reading Augustine, resulting in a solidification of his views on predestination.⁵⁵ At Corbie, Gottschalk studied with Ratramnus,⁵⁶ who according to ecclesiastical historian James Prichard, ‘may perhaps have led him originally to entertain those erroneous notions’ related to double predestination.⁵⁷ The larger debate, having been a topic of controversy in theological circles in Europe for almost half a century, now included discussion about predestination to reprobation.

By the late 830s, Gottschalk was teaching predestination of the elect and reprobate in the March of Friuli in northern Italy. In 839 or 840 at a hospice of the count of Friuli named Eberhard, Gottschalk shared his views with Noting, the bishop elect of Verona.⁵⁸ Noting later met with Rabanus Maurus, and communicated Gottschalk’s views to him. Rabanus promised Noting that he would write a treatise on predestination countering Gottschalk’s views, which Rabanus penned in 840.⁵⁹ Six years later, Rabanus wrote to Count Eberhard warning him about Gottschalk and discouraging him from allowing Gottschalk to teach in his march.⁶⁰ However, there had been bad blood between

⁵³ John J. O’Meara, *Eriugena* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 33: ‘Somewhat before the outbreak of the controversy a Council of Paris in 829 had pronounced clearly against those who taught that Christians were saved (even if they persisted in evil doing) and pagans were automatically punished.’ O’Meara goes on to describe the condemned view as a form of fatalism.

⁵⁴ Bernard Boller, *Gottschalk d’Orbais de Fulda à Hautvillers: une dissidence* (Paris: Editions SDE, 2004), 240.

⁵⁵ J. M. O’Donnell, “Gottschalk of Orbais,” in *NCE*, 2nd ed., Vol. 6 (Detroit: Thomson-Gale, 2003), 371; Timothy Roberts, “Gottschalk of Orbais,” in Joseph R. Strayer, ed., *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, Vol. 5 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1985), 638; Eleanor Shipley Duckett, *Carolingian Portraits: A Study in the Ninth Century* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1962), 154-5; Charles L. Wells, *The Age of Charlemagne* (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1898), 369.

⁵⁶ *ODCC*, 3rd ed., 696; Roberts, “Gottschalk of Orbais,” 638; Neander, *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, 473; Prichard, *Life and Times of Hincmar*, 135.

⁵⁷ Prichard, *Life and Times of Hincmar*, 136.

⁵⁸ Neander, *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, 475.

⁵⁹ Rabanus Maurus, *Epistola 5. Ad Notingum, cum libro de Praedestinatione Dei*. PL 112:1530-53. A forthcoming book by Victor Genke and Francis X. Gumerlock, tentatively entitled *Gottschalk of Orbais: Translated Texts from a Medieval Predestination Controversy*, translates into English the letter, without the treatise on predestination.

⁶⁰ Rabanus Maurus, *Epistola 42*. MGH, Epist. 5:481-7. Excerpts of this letter are also translated in Genke and Gumerlock, *Gottschalk of Orbais*.

Rabanus and Gottschalk for twenty years over issues other than predestination.⁶¹ (In the 820s Gottschalk argued his way out of Rabanus' monastery at Fulda.) In 848 at the Council of Mainz, Gottschalk met his former teacher, who had now been elevated to the bishopric. Gottschalk brought with him a written reply accusing Rabanus of Semi-Pelagianism. What followed was Gottschalk being flogged, perpetually imprisoned, and even refused Christian burial.

In the history of Christian theology, Gottschalk was not really the maverick that many have constructed him to be. Debate over grace, free will and its corollaries had been taking place throughout most of the century before him, with influential theologians and church leaders taking their respective stands. By the 820s and 830s, when Gottschalk was still forming his theological opinions regarding the issues of the time, the parties were already becoming polarized,⁶² and the topics of discussion expanded to include the extent of the atonement, eternal security, and divine predestination of reprobates to eternal punishment. So when Rabanus and Gottschalk began opposing one another on predestination, theological sparring on this issue was nothing new.⁶³ Those who advocated divine sovereignty abounded.⁶⁴ But the debate had reached its boiling point, and an all-out battle ensued. Gottschalk, rebellious and eccentric by nature, became the fall guy, or, depending upon your perspective, the champion.

Abstract

Scholarship often regards the predestinarian ninth-century monk, Gottschalk of Orbais, as one who stood virtually alone promoting the sovereignty of God in a time when Semi-pelagian soteriology ruled supreme. An investigation of the literature of the eighth and early ninth centuries challenges that view. Many church leaders in the century before Gottschalk taught divine predestination as a decree that prepares, grants, and secures the salvation of God's elect rather than a decree based upon divine foreknowledge of human decisions regarding salvation. Based upon evidence that debate about predestination existed and intensified in the decades prior to Gottschalk's ministry, an alternative view of Gottschalk's role in the history of Christianity is suggested. It is probably more accurate to view him as a "fall guy" than a theological maverick.

⁶¹ In the 820s Gottschalk argued his way out of Rabanus' monastery at Fulda. Cf. David Ganz, "The Debate on Predestination," in Margaret T. Gibson and Janet L. Nelson, eds., *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*, 2nd rev. ed. (Burlington, VT: Variorum, 1990), 285-302 at 287. Mayke de Jong, who examined the social relationships between teachers and pupils in the ninth century ("From Scolastici to Scioli: Alcuin and the Formation of an Intellectual Élite," in L.A.J.R. Houwen and A.A. MacDonalad, eds., *Alcuin of York: Scholar at the Carolingian Court* [Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998], 45-57 at 56-7), concluded: 'When all is said and done, Rabanus's overwhelming and enduring rage against Gottschalk was nothing but the revenge of a father who could not bear his love being spurned.'

⁶² By 846, Rabanus Maurus called the predestinarians a *secta* (*Epistola 42*, MGH, Epist. 5:487, line 19), and by the 850s, according to Prichard (*Life and Times of Hincmar*, 134), 'the whole Gallican Church was divided by them [disputes on predestination] into two parties.' Prudentius of Troyes, on the side of the predestinarians, made views on predestination a test of orthodoxy when the royal notary Aeneas was being appointed as bishop of Paris. Cf. PL 115:1365-8.

⁶³ Laistner, *Intellectual Heritage of the Early Middle Ages*, 214: 'Discussions arising out of that doctrine [predestination] were of course no new thing.'

⁶⁴ Remigius and Florus of Lyons, Prudentius of Troyes, and Lupus of Ferrière expressed this in writing in the 850s.