

Gottschalk of Orbais: A Medieval Predestinarian¹

(c. 808-867)

By Francis X. Gumerlock

Seven hundred years before Calvin wrote his *Institutes*, a medieval monk from Saxony named Gottschalk articulated and defended the doctrine of salvation through the sovereign grace of God. This article will introduce the person of Gottschalk and present his views on the bondage of the human will, the gracious enablement of God necessary for a person to perform salutary acts, predestination and election, and Christ's atonement. Gottschalk's positions on these subjects will be illustrated from his own writings, most of which were discovered and edited in the twentieth century² and recently translated by Victor Genke, an accomplished linguist and historian who resides in Russia, and myself.³ The article will then discuss the opposition against him, compare and contrast Gottschalk with the early Reformers, and briefly answer questions which participants raised about Gottschalk at the 2007 *Kerux* conference hosted by Northwest Theological Seminary. It will conclude with an exhortation for prospective researchers and translators to continue working on Gottschalk and the ninth-century predestination controversy.

Gottschalk's Life

Gottschalk was born about the year 804 in Saxony, which is in present-day Germany. His parents gave him over to a monastery at Fulda when he was very young, to be educated and trained for a religious profession. After reaching the age of majority he applied for formal withdrawal from monastic life saying that such a life should be one's own decision not that of one's parents. Having been released from the monastery about 829 Gottschalk began traveling around France and Italy, staying a few years in this place and a few years in that. One of the monasteries at which Gottschalk studied was Orbais in the diocese of Soissons, hence the name Gottschalk of Orbais. For a time, he also stayed at the monastery at Corbie, and undoubtedly benefited from its great library. There is evidence that Gottschalk was involved in missionary work in what is today Croatia; still standing there today is a little chapel which is thought to have been built under his ministry.

As a scholar, Gottschalk was adept in many areas. We have poems written by him, several treatises on grammar, and theological writings on the Trinity and the Eucharist. According to the description in a letter from Hincmar, archbishop of Reims, to Pope Nicholas, Gottschalk possessed a great memory. From memory, he could recite passages from the church fathers throughout a whole day without any break. Hincmar implied in that same letter, that as a teacher Gottschalk was a master with words and quite convincing to his hearers.⁴

¹ An earlier version of this article was presented and distributed in booklet form under the title "Predestination Before Calvin: A Ninth-Century Monk and His Doctrine of Grace" at the May 2007 Kerux conference in Lynnwood, Washington.

² Many of them were discovered by Germain Morin around 1930, and fifteen years later edited in Cyrille Lambot, *Oeuvres théologiques et grammaticales de Godescalc d'Orbais* (Louvain: "Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense" Bureaux, 1945) [hereafter referred to as "Lambot"].

³ Victor Genke and Francis X. Gumerlock, *Gottschalk of Orbais: Translated Texts from a Medieval Predestination Controversy*. It includes English translations of Gottschalk's Reply to Rabanus Maurus, Confession of Faith at Mainz, Tome to Gislemar, Shorter Confession, Longer Confession, Answers to Various Questions, On Predestination, On Different Ways of Speaking About Redemption, and Another Treatise on Predestination. We are in the process of revising it for publication. Hereafter this book will be referred to as "Genke and Gumerlock" with pagination from our July 2007 manuscript of 366 pages. All translations in this article are mine unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Hincmar of Reims, Letter to Pope Nicholas. *Patrologia Latina* (hereafter PL) 126:45-6; Genke and Gumerlock, 294-5.

Gottschalk's preaching included a strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God in salvation. He also wrote several treatises on predestination, and sent them to his friends in different parts of Europe. One particular bishop, Rabanus Maurus of Mainz, who has Gottschalk's former teacher at the monastery in Fulda, opposed Gottschalk's teachings which, he said, were influencing the faithful in his diocese in a negative manner.

In the 840s, Gottschalk stayed as a guest on the estate of a certain count⁵ in northern Italy, using it as a headquarters for his ministry. The count was essentially his patron. In 846, Rabanus Maurus wrote a letter to the count saying in effect, "How can you support this man, Gottschalk, who is teaching this horrible doctrine of predestination?" Gottschalk may have been on a missionary trip when the count received the letter. Upon finding out about the letter, he decided to make a trip back to the northern regions to confront his former teacher about the matter.

In 848, there was an ecclesiastical council in the city of Mainz attended by many heads of both church and state, including Rabanus, who by this time had been elevated to bishop. This was an important council, and even the king, Louis the German, was present. At this council, Gottschalk and some of his followers presented a treatise and a confession of faith stating their views. The council declared them heretical, but Gottschalk refused to recant. For this he was flogged, and had to swear that he would not come into the kingdom of Louis ever again spreading his doctrine. From there Rabanus sent Gottschalk under custody to a bishop in another diocese, Hincmar of Reims, who technically was Gottschalk's ecclesiastical superior.

Hincmar examined Gottschalk's teaching in a synod of about fifteen bishops and he, too, found Gottschalk heretical. According to the Benedictine rule regarding incorrigible monks, Hincmar had Gottschalk flogged. In addition, he was compelled to throw the books that he wrote into the fire, and was imprisoned in the monastery at Hautvillers, where he remained for the next twenty years until his death.

The Predestination Controversy

In the monastery where he was under house arrest, Gottschalk managed to obtain writing material, compose treatises, and have them delivered to their recipients and circulated. Consequently, from prison Gottschalk started no small controversy on predestination within the Frankish empire. The debate centered around three topics or questions: predestination, free will, and redemption by the blood of Christ. Interestingly, some of the leading theologians of the time, particularly those in Corbie, Lyons, and Ferrière, said that Gottschalk was right in his theology on these points. Archbishop Hincmar mustered a few theologians for his side, who debated the predestinarians throughout the 850s. In several regional synods the opposing theologians condemned each others' doctrine, until finally they came to a compromise about 860.

Many of the standard church histories have a chapter summarizing the persons and issues involved in this ninth-century controversy on predestination. Unfortunately, most of the primary source material from the debate— the treatises on predestination and decrees of the synods— are still exclusively in Latin. This, Lord willing, I hope to rectify. About fifteen years ago, I translated Gottschalk's *Shorter Confession* and fragments from another work.⁶ In 2003, a former classmate at Saint Louis University⁷ informed me of a website dedicated to Gottschalk, constructed by Victor Genke, who was in the process of translating some of Gottschalk's works.⁸ I contacted Victor and shortly thereafter we began to collaborate in our translating. Over the past four years, we have

⁵ Count Eberhard of Frioli.

⁶ I translated these in an independent study in Medieval Latin at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs with Professor Kendra (Ettenhoffer) Henry.

⁷ Jonathan Barlow of Saint Louis, Missouri.

⁸ <http://gottschalk.inrebus.com/>

translated 21 treatises, nine written by Gottschalk himself and the remaining by others associated with the controversy. Victor wrote an extensive introduction; I compiled a bibliography; and we are in the process of revising our manuscript for an academic press that is very interested in publishing it.

Bondage of the Will and Freedom through Grace

In his *Answer to Various Questions*, Gottschalk discusses free will, teaching that humans do not have the freedom to do good apart from God. He writes,

If anyone says that the reprobate have the free will to do good or even can have it, the Son of God, clearer than light and more brightly than the sun itself, convicts such one of error, when He says concerning the Holy Spirit: *Whom the world cannot receive* (Jn 14:17). Consequently, holy Augustine rightly says concerning the will of the reprobate: *O bad will without God!* Therefore it is clear without a scruple, is evident without ambiguity, is manifest without a cloud that just as the reprobate do not have [freedom] to do good, but [only] evil, so also they certainly do not have it to say the truth but [only] to lie.⁹

A little later in that same treatise, Gottschalk recommends that on the subject of free will, one should read

On the Psalms by Cassiodorus, where he says on the verse: *It is good to hope in the Lord* (Ps 117:9; Vulg., 118:9): *The profit [obtained by] mortals is never explained through free will*, and the book by Prosper against the conference of Cassian which is entitled *On God's Protection*, and his *Answers* to the Gauls, Genoans, and Vincentians, and his epistle, which is entitled *To Rufinus*, and the last part of *Moralia* by holy Gregory, as well as the first part of his *Commentary on Ezekiel*, and you will praise the omnipotent God. It should be clearly known that, as holy Augustine says, as much capability of seeing that a healthy eye has in a body [is comparable to] the amount of capability and possibility for doing good that free will, liberated through God's grace, has in a soul, mind or heart. Nevertheless, just as even a very healthy eye, being put in darkness, without the assistance of light from without cannot discern anything, so also undoubtedly without God's grace and help, the free will cannot do anything good.¹⁰

Again, in his *Longer Confession*, written in the form of a prayer to God, Gottschalk writes, "For, truly no one, not any one of your elect, have ever been able to please you from themselves even for a moment, but rather all of your people have pleased, do please, and will please you always from you, through your free grace."¹¹

From the above citations, it is clear that this medieval monk believed that humans were unable to come to God of their own free will without God's grace first freeing and turning their wills toward Him.

Predestination and Election

In his *Reply to Rabanus Maurus*, Gottschalk put forth his doctrine of predestination in this manner:

Indeed, just as He [God] predestined all of the elect to life through the gratuity of the free grace of His kindness, as the pages of the Old and New Testaments very clearly, skillfully, and soberly show those seeking wisdom on this matter, so also He altogether predestined the reprobate to the

⁹ Lambot, 150-1; Genke and Gumerlock, 162. Translation by Genke.

¹⁰ Lambot, 152-3; Genke and Gumerlock, 165. Translation by Genke.

¹¹ Lambot, 76; Genke and Gumerlock, 152.

punishment of eternal death, of course, through the most righteous judgment of His immutable justice.¹²

Likewise, at the beginning of his *Longer Confession*, he wrote:

I believe and also confess that you [God] foreknew before the ages whatsoever was going to happen, whether good things or bad things; but you predestined only good things. However, [with this question] having been investigated by your faithful ones, you have revealed this to them—that the good things have been predestined in a twofold manner. It is evident that they are known to consist in both benefits of grace and likewise judgments of justice. On behalf of both, the psalmist offers the surest proof: *You, Lord, love both mercy and judgment* (Ps 32:5). And so you have freely predestined eternal life for all of your elect, and also them unto everlasting glory. For, certainly you predestined life for them in vain if you had not also predestined them to that life. So also in nearly the same way, you deservedly predestined everlasting punishment *for the devil and his angels* (Matt 25:41) and also for all reprobate persons, and similarly you predestined those same for it.¹³

Particular Redemption

1 Timothy 2:4, which says that God *wills all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*, for a long time has troubled those who profess divine election. Although interpretations of predestinarian-minded Christians vary,¹⁴ some view "all" as synecdoche, a mode of speaking in which a whole is used for a part. This is the way Gottschalk interpreted the passage, i.e., "all" means all of the redeemed. He wrote in his *Reply to Rabanus Maurus*, "*All those whom God wills to be saved* (1 Tim 2:4) without doubt are saved. They cannot be saved unless God wills them to be saved; and there is no one whom God wills to be saved, who will not be saved, since our God *did all things whatsoever He willed* (Ps 135:6).¹⁵

For Gottschalk, God's salvific will was particular to the elect and Christ shed His blood for the redemption of only the predestined. Another fragment of that same treatise explains: "All those impious persons and sinners for whom the Son of God came to redeem by shedding His own blood, those the omnipotent goodness of God predestined to life and irrevocably willed only those to be saved."¹⁶ And, in a fragment extant from his *Tome to Gislemar*, Gottschalk taught that "the one who says that the Lord suffered generally for all, for the salvation and redemption of both the elect and reprobate, contradicts God the Father Himself."¹⁷ However, his teaching of particular redemption can most clearly be seen in five paragraphs he wrote in *Answers to Various Questions*, which I shall cite in their entirety.

Again, about the redemption of only the elect, the apostle Paul says: *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us* (Gal 3:13). Therefore, if Christ redeemed the reprobate from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for them, they therefore will not be

¹² Fragment preserved in Hincmar's *De praedestinatione*, 5. PL 121:365; Lambot, 39; Genke and Gumerlock, 107.

¹³ Lambot, 55-6; Genke and Gumerlock, 119.

¹⁴ About five different interpretations of the passage can be found in Augustine's writings alone. Common to most of them is avoidance of interpretation that makes salvation dependent upon human free will. For two recent interpretations from a Calvinist perspective, see Abraham Kuyper, "What Does 1 Timothy 2:4 Teach?" chapter four of his *Particular Grace: A Defense of God's Sovereignty in Salvation*. Translated from Dutch by Marvin Kamps (Grandville, Michigan: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2001), 34-42; and John Piper, "Are There Two Wills in God? Divine Election and God's Desire for All to Be Saved," chapter five in Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware, eds., *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 107-31.

¹⁵ Preserved in Hincmar's *De praedestinatione*, 21; PL 121:366; Lambot, 40; Genke and Gumerlock, 108.

¹⁶ Preserved in Hincmar's *De praedestinatione*, 21; PL 121:366-7; Lambot, 40; Genke and Gumerlock, 109.

¹⁷ Lambot, 42; Genke and Gumerlock, 111. Translation by Victor Genke.

cursed reprobates, but entirely blessed. However, the reprobate will not be blessed, but rather it is evident that they are surely accursed. To them the Son of God is going to say: *Depart from me, you accursed ones, into everlasting fire* (Matt 25:41). Therefore, Christ did not redeem the reprobate from the curse of the law, nor was He made a curse for them.

Again, the apostle Paul says: *If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not even spare his own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also give us with Him all things* (Rom 8:31-32). Therefore, if God gave His Son even for all of the reprobate, then He has given to them with Him all good things, and through this also eternal life. But He has not given them with Him all good things. Therefore, He did not give Him up for them.

Again: *But God commends His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Much more having now been justified in His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him* (Rom 5:8-9). Therefore, if Christ died even for the reprobate, then the reprobate too, having been justified in His blood, will be saved from wrath through Him. But the reprobate will not be saved from wrath through Him. Therefore, Christ did not die for the reprobate.

There follows: *For, if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved through His life* (Rom 5:10). Therefore, if the reprobate were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, they would be saved through His life. But they will not be saved through His life. Therefore, the reprobate were not reconciled to God through the death of His Son.

Again, the apostle Paul says: *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their sins against them* (2 Cor 5:19). Therefore, if God the Father, who was in Christ hanging on the wood of the cross, reconciled even the reprobate world to Himself, then He neither has counted, nor is counting, nor will count their sins against them. But God indeed has counted, is counting, and will count the sins of the reprobate world against them.¹⁸

Opposition against Gottschalk's Form of Double Predestination

As mentioned earlier, a number of theologians came forward and said that Gottschalk's teaching was correct regarding twofold predestination and Christ shedding His blood exclusively for the redeemed. His opponents, however, said that his strict form of double predestination was too harsh. Gottschalk would not concede to their belief that God before all time predestined simply *the punishment* of the reprobate. He insisted on saying that God predestined *the reprobate* to punishment.

This teaching on predestination of the reprobate to eternal punishment troubled his opponents because they believed that he was teaching that God had predestined people to evil, which would make God the author of sin. In response, Gottschalk, in several places in his writings, distinguished between the evil of sin which God *does not* cause, and the evil of punishment which He *does* execute.¹⁹ Gottschalk also expressed in a number of places that the punishment of the reprobate was merited. One example of this comes from his *Shorter Confession*, where he wrote:

I believe and confess that the omnipotent and immutable God has graciously foreknown and predestined the holy angels and elect humans to eternal life, and that He equally predestined the devil himself, the head of all the demons, with all of his apostate angels and also with all those reprobate humans unto *merited* eternal death, most certainly because of their own foreknown future *evil merits*, through His most righteous judgment.²⁰

¹⁸ Lambot, 157-8; Genke and Gumerlock, 169-71.

¹⁹ Lambot, 183, 189; Genke and Gumerlock, 176, 183-4.

²⁰ Lambot, 52; Genke and Gumerlock, 114.

Another issue that opponents raised against Gottschalk was that he preached fatalism, which was leading people to desperation and spiritual negligence. Rabanus Maurus wrote that Gottschalk taught predestination as if conversion from the status of sinner to saint were impossible.²¹ In other words, Gottschalk's teaching diminished the need for all sinners to repent and seek salvation from Christ. Rabanus' assessment may not have been far from the truth, given the fact that Amolo of Lyons, who had almost no ill-will toward Gottschalk, made the same observation. Gottschalk sent some of his writings to Amolo, who responded with a rhetorical question: "What is it to think and say that His predestination unalterably imposed on them [the reprobate] this necessity so that they can do nothing at all for their salvation, if not to blaspheme grievously and horribly against God?"²²

Regarding the charge that Gottschalk's teaching led sinners to desperation, Amolo seemed to have some evidence. In a treatise, now lost, that Gottschalk addressed to bishops and sent to Amolo, Gottschalk apparently taught that if a person were predestined for condemnation, since the divine sentence could not be changed and the person could never be saved, that person should merely ask God to lighten his punishment in hell. Amolo responded saying:

And the bishops, to whom you write, you exhort, as if compassionately, that they should preach to people that since they cannot escape the predetermined damnation, they should humiliate themselves and supplicate God that He may soften a little what is fixed for them or may alleviate the tortures. Tell me, I implore you, where in the holy Scriptures did you read that? Where in the holy and Catholic doctors of the Church did you find that?²³

To these accusations, that his teaching was fatalistic and was causing sinners not to flee to Christ for salvation but to despair, Gottschalk, to my knowledge, never responded. If the portrayals of his doctrine put forth by Rabanus and Amolo were grossly inaccurate, I wish Gottschalk would have made an effort to clear himself by elucidating his beliefs regarding the call of the Gospel for all sinners to believe, repent, and be saved, regardless of their final destinies known only to God. Perhaps he did address the matter in a work that is now lost. On the other hand, were these bishops representing a true picture of Gottschalk's teaching? If that were the case, I would conclude that Gottschalk on this point did not properly balance the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Did Gottschalk, like HyperCalvinists of more recent times, refuse to preach to all persons about a need for faith in Christ and repentance unto life?²⁴ I would

²¹ Rabanus's Letter to Noting: "For, they say that His predestination makes it so that...no person predestined to death can in any way recover himself to life." PL 112:1530; Genke and Gumerlock, 271; Letter to Hincmar: "He also says that certain people in this world, according to the predestination of God, which compels them to go into death, are unable to correct themselves from error and sin, as if God from the beginning had made them to be incorrigible..." PL 112:1575. Genke and Gumerlock, 275.

²² Amolo of Lyons, Letter to Gottschalk, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Ep. 5:372; Genke and Gumerlock, 315. Translation by Genke.

²³ Amolo, Letter to Gottschalk. PL 116:92. Genke and Gumerlock, 100-1. Translation by Genke.

²⁴ For a modern example of this, see the doctrine statement of the Gospel Standard Baptists, taken from a series of articles by J. H. Gosden entitled "Our Articles of Faith," Gospel Standard (July 1991), 203; (Sept 1991), 269; and (Dec 1991), 365, which reads: "Article 24. We believe that the invitations of the gospel, being spirit and life (that is, under the influence of the Holy Spirit), are intended only for those who have been made by the blessed Spirit to feel their lost state as sinners and their need of Christ as their Savior, and to repent of and forsake their sins. Article 26. We deny duty-faith and duty-repentance—these terms signifying that it is every man's duty spiritually and savingly to repent and believe. We deny also that there is any capability in man by nature to do any spiritual good whatever; so that we reject the doctrine that men in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in or turn to God. Article 33. Therefore, that for ministers in the present day to address unconverted persons, or indiscriminately all in a mixed congregation, calling upon them to savingly repent, believe, and receive Christ, or perform any other acts dependent upon the new creative power of the Holy Ghost, is, on the one hand, to imply creature power, and, on the other hand to deny the doctrine of special redemption."

like to think not. After all, he was a missionary in the Balkans. But the question deserves further investigation; and maybe his poems and grammatical writings can shed light on it.

Gottschalk and Reformed Theology

In view of Gottschalk's teaching on predestination, human inability, and the extent of Christ's redemptive sacrifice, many see him as a precursor of Reformed theology.²⁵ However, in describing him as such, caution must be exercised in order to avoid anachronism, i.e., reading modern or sixteenth-century concepts into Gottschalk's writings penned in the ninth century. Without question, the contexts, backgrounds, and struggles of Gottschalk differed drastically from those of the Reformers. Gottschalk's theology involved the interpretation of authors of late antiquity like Augustine, Fulgentius, Cassiodorus, and Gregory the Great, while the staples of sixteenth century theological education were the writings of Lombard and the schoolmen. The Reformers were contending with indulgences, the concept of a "treasury of merit" from which the pope could dispense grace, and a Latin liturgy that could not be understood by most laypersons. These were almost entirely absent in the case of Gottschalk, as were debates on justification. And while Luther's feelings toward Rome were reflected in his public burning of a papal bull, Gottschalk actually appealed to the pope as a potential advocate.

With that being said, finding corollaries and similarities between two theologians separated by centuries is not necessarily an illegitimate or unfruitful exercise. According to church historian Fernand Mourret, "Gottschalk's doctrines and life are not without analogy with those of Luther."²⁶ Interestingly, Luther and Gottschalk were both of German stock and both from the area of Saxony; both were educated in monasteries and later released; and both were products of intellectual renaissances that were sweeping through Europe during their respective epochs. The doctrine of both was examined and condemned at ecclesiastical councils. Both were so thoroughly convinced of the correctness of their doctrine that they stubbornly defied extremely powerful ecclesiastical authorities who came against them. Finally, their personal lives were equally enriched with the bizarre and colorful. Gottschalk refused to wash his face for long periods of time, prophesied events that never came to pass, and once requested to settle his case by means of an ordeal that involved him being dipped in barrels of boiling water, oil, animal fat, and pitch.²⁷ In the life of Luther, I recall reading the story of some German nuns who, after embracing Lutheran doctrine, escaped from their convent hiding in the empty barrels of a beer cart and showed up on Luther's doorstep, expecting him to find husbands for them.

Furthermore, the ability of the Gospel to transcend all times and cultures, a shared salvific experience by members of the one body of Christ from different time periods, the ongoing illumination of God's people by the same Spirit throughout the ages, and the passing down of

²⁵ According to D. E. Nineham ("Gottschalk of Orbais: Reactionary or Precursor of the Reformation?" *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 40.1 [1989]:1-18 at 12), Gottschalk's "insistence on the absolute sovereignty of God" is the reason why many have seen fit to view him as a "precursor of the Reformers." However, Nineham's own concluding analysis is as follows: "As for the question raised in the title, it will be clear that, despite many claims to the contrary, it is only in a very partial and rather Pickwickian sense that Gottschalk can be called a precursor of the Reformation. True, his doctrine of predestination resembled that of the leading Reformers, and the sense of the sovereignty of God in which it was rooted was akin to theirs. On the other hand he was, and rejoiced to be, a strict upholder of Catholic orthodoxy. His views on predestination and the Trinity were not part of a more general protest against the ancient Catholic religion; rather an attempt to recapture it in its fullness. The cultural conditions which alone make possible the stance of the Reformers, and the widespread welcome for it, were almost entirely lacking in his day, as witness the rapid loss of interest in his views and his fate, and the lack of interest in him during the following centuries. To classify him as a Reformer before the time is to commit a sort of cultural category mistake." (p. 18) The issue of Gottschalk as a Reformed precursor was also treated in Benoît Lavaud, "Précurseur de Calvin ou témoin de l'augustinisme? Le cas de Godescalc," *Révue Thomiste* 15 (1932):71-101.

²⁶ Fernand Mourret, *A History of the Catholic Church*, Vol. 3. Newton Thompson, trans. (Saint Louis and London: Herder, 1936), 475.

²⁷ His request for an ordeal is in his *Longer Confession*. Lambot, 74-5; Genke and Gumerlock, 151.

exegetical traditions from generation to generation, may all contribute to the fact that Christians separated by centuries sometimes manifest similar currents of thought.

Although the early Reformers in all likelihood had not read Gottschalk's writings, both were battling what they perceived as Semi-Pelagianism infecting the church of their respective times. And because they shared common weapons—the sword of God's word and hammer of Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings—the similarity between Gottschalk's statements on the bondage of the will, gracious ability, predestination, and redemption with those of the early Reformers, especially Calvin and his followers, is sometimes uncanny.

Questions and Answers on Gottschalk

Three questions were asked about Gottschalk during the question and answer session at the *Kerux* conference. These are listed below along with my answers.

1. *What were the politics involved in the Gottschalk controversy?*

The Gottschalk controversy occurred during the Carolingian period of European history. About 781 Charlemagne recruited Alcuin of York, one of the top scholars in Christendom at the time, to be the palace teacher. Through him Charlemagne's educational reforms were realized, so that when Gottschalk was being educated an intellectual renaissance was taking place in the monasteries and cathedral schools. Gottschalk was schooled under Rabanus Maurus, who in turn had been taught by Alcuin.²⁸

From the social and intellectual background to politics, the secular emperors seemed very much interested in the controversy on predestination, especially Charles the Bald. He convened a synod at Quierzy in 853 that addressed the issue of predestination. At his request Ratramnus of Corbie, Lupus of Ferrières, and Hincmar all composed explanations of predestination for him.²⁹

Regarding ecclesiastical politics, there seems to have been some rivalry between certain clerics in the south and Hincmar in the north. Apparently, in the southeastern region there was dissatisfaction after a certain archbishop named Ebbo was deposed. Some thought that his deposition was improper, and there were most likely deep resentments after Hincmar the metropolitan prohibited clerics who had been ordained by Ebbo from exercising their ecclesiastical functions.³⁰ According to some scholars, these factors had a hand in why the southern theologians tended to favor Gottschalk over Hincmar. Ebbo had been Gottschalk's

²⁸ Charlemagne's "Capitularies on Education" are translated in Colman J. Barry, ed., *Readings in Church History*, Rev. ed., Vol. 1 (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1985), 224-8. On Alcuin's role in the Carolingian renaissance, Albrecht Diem, "The Emergence of Monastic Schools. The Role of Alcuin," and Mayke de Jong, "From Scolastici to Scioli. Alcuin and the Formation of an Intellectual Elite," in L.A.J.R. Houwen and A.A. MacDonald, eds., *Alcuin of York: Scholar at the Carolingian Court* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), 27-44, 45-57; John J. Contreni, "The Carolingian Renaissance: Education and Literary Culture," in Rosamond McKitterick, ed., *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. 2 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 709-57; E. Ann Matter, "Exegesis and Christian Education: The Carolingian Model," in Patrick Henry, ed., *Schools of Thought in the Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 90-105. Older, but still valuable, are Andrew Fleming West, *Alcuin and the Rise of the Christian Schools* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892); and James Bass Mullinger, *The Schools of Charles the Great and the Restoration of Education in the Ninth Century* (London: Longmans, Green, 1877).

²⁹ Ratramnus of Corbie, *De Praedestinatione Dei*, PL 121:11-80. English: Timothy Roland Roberts, "A Translation and Critical Edition of Ratramnus of Corbie's `De Praedestinatione Dei'," dissertation (University of Missouri-Columbia, 1977); Lupus of Ferrières, *Liber de tribus quaestionibus*. PL 119:619-66; and Letter 78. In *The Letters of Lupus of Ferrières*. Graydon W. Regenos, trans. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), 86-91; Hincmar of Reims, *De praedestinatione* PL 125:49-474.

³⁰ David Ganz, "The Debate on Predestination," in Margaret T. Gibson and Janet L. Nelson, eds., *Charles the Bald. Court and Kingdom*, 2nd rev. ed. (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1990), 283-301 at 285; P. R. McKeon, "The Carolingian Councils of Savonnières (859) and Tusey (860) and Their Background," *Revue Bénédictine* 84 (1974):75-110 at 98-100; Charles Poulet, *A History of the Catholic Church*, Vol. 1. Sidney A. Raemers, trans. (Saint Louis and London: Herder, 1946), 364-5.

patron. According to Dermot Moran, "In part, the predestination issue was a pretext for a political power struggle between Hincmar and the northern bishops, against Florus and the southern bishops of Gaul."³¹

The expert on the political aspects of the controversy is really Victor Genke. He is currently writing his dissertation in the history department of the N.I. Lobachevsky State University of Nizhni Novgorod entitled "Political Struggle and the Church in the Carolingian Empire: The Controversy over Predestination in Connection with Gottschalk of Orbais." Much of the fruit of his research is in the lengthy introduction that he wrote for our book.

2. How did the Gottschalk controversy conclude?

Rabanus Maurus removed himself from the controversy rather early, as did John the Scot after the latter wrote a treatise on predestination against Gottschalk to which many theologians vigorously objected.³² As mentioned earlier, the two sides held several opposing councils in the 850s on the issue of predestination. Then in 860, the groups came together and reached a compromise at the Council of Tusey where, through the influence of Hincmar, it was stated that divine predestination is unto life, free will was not lost after the fall but in need of healing through grace, God wills all men to be saved, and Christ died for all.³³ Hincmar's side won the day.

Gottschalk, still imprisoned, appealed to Pope Nicholas who summoned a meeting at which Hincmar and Gottschalk were to appear before papal legates. Hincmar ignored the summons and later wrote Nicholas a long letter explaining his absence. Gottschalk died in the monastery at Hautvillers in 868, holding fast to his doctrinal positions, for which he was refused communion and the last rites upon his death.

3. Did the Reformers know about Gottschalk and refer to him in their writings?

To my knowledge the early Reformers did not know about Gottschalk nor did they seem to have been aware of his writings on predestination. Gottschalk's confessions were not published until 1631 by James Ussher, an Irish Calvinist archbishop, and then again in 1650 by Gilbert Mauguin, who was a French Jansenist.³⁴

The Need for Additional Scholarship and Translations

I am delighted to be a part of providing the English speaking world with a translation of Gottschalk's works on predestination, and it is my hope that it will be a stimulus for more research. There is much work to be done on the dating of Gottschalk's writings, on the development of his thought, on his interpretation of Augustine, on his view of reprobation, and on the role that mysticism played in his theology. Additionally, the relationship between his view

³¹ Dermot Moran, "The Predestination Debate," chapter two of his *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 27-34 at 33. For a contrast in theology between the northerners and southerners, John J. O'Meara, *Eriugena* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 33.

³² John Scottus Eriugena, *Treatise on Divine Predestination*. Mary Brennan, trans. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998).

³³ The record of the council is in Hincmar's Epistle 21. PL 126:122-32.

³⁴ James Ussher, *Gotteschalci, et praedestinationae controversiae ab eo motae historia: una cum duplici ejusdem confessione, nunc primum in lucem edita* (Dublin, 1631); Gilbert Mauguin. *Veterum auctorum qui IX. Saeculo de praedestinatione et gratia scripserunt opera et fragmenta plurima nunc primum in luce edita* (Paris, Ioannis Billaine, 1650).

of grace and his sacramental theology needs to be explored,³⁵ as does the relationship between Gottschalk's predestinarian views and his eschatology.³⁶

Many works from the ninth-century predestination controversy still have not been translated into English. Among them are Remigius' *Solution to a Certain Question*,³⁷ Florus' *On Holding Immovably to the Truth of Scripture*³⁸ and *Book Against the Erroneous Definitions of John Scottus Eriugena*,³⁹ Servatus Lupus' *Book on Three Questions*,⁴⁰ Prudentius' *On Predestination Against John the Scot*,⁴¹ and the treatises entitled *On Predestination* by Rabanus Maurus⁴² and Hincmar.⁴³ It is my hope that God will raise up other translators to embrace this challenge.

The purpose of this article was to introduce the person and teaching of this fascinating medieval predestinarian. Gottschalk saw in holy Scripture and the fathers that man's will was entirely bound in sin until God graciously freed it. He also preached that God, before the foundation of the world, chose a people who, through no merits of their own, would be redeemed through the blood of His Son. These would be effectually called, and through God's gift of perseverance would enjoy Him forever. Although Gottschalk's superiors were uncomfortable with his teaching of predestination as double, and that Christ's blood was shed only for the elect, a number of his contemporary theologians regarded his teaching as representative of the true faith handed down by the apostles.

³⁵ Gottschalk wrote a treatise *On the Body and Blood of the Lord*. Lambot, 324-37. Victor Genke began to translate it, but it will not be included in our present book.

³⁶ There is quite a bit of discussion in the writings of Gottschalk and others in the controversy on Judgment Day and Antichrist, and for a time Gottschalk was occupied with questions related to the beatific vision.

³⁷ *Absolutio cujusdam quaestionis*. PL 121:1067-1084.

³⁸ *De tenenda immobiliter scripturae veritate*. PL 121:1083-1134.

³⁹ *Adversus Joannis Scoti Eriugae erroneas definitiones liber*. PL 119:101-250.

⁴⁰ *Liber de tribus quaestionibus*. PL 119:619-666.

⁴¹ *De praedestinatione contra Johannem Scotum cognomento Eriugenam*. PL 115:1009-1366.

⁴² *De praedestinatione*. PL 112:1531-1553.

⁴³ *De praedestinatione*. PL 125:49-474