

Peter Sammons

Reprobation: from Augustine to the Synod of Dort

The Historical Development of the Reformed Doctrine of Reprobation



Reformed Historical Theology

Edited by
Herman J. Selderhuis

in Co-operation with
Emidio Campi, Irene Dingel, Benyamin F. Intan,
Elsie Anne McKee, Richard A. Muller, and Risto Saarinen

Volume 63

Peter Sammons

Reprobation: from Augustine to the Synod of Dort

The Historical Development of the Reformed
Doctrine of Reprobation

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek:
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data available online: <https://dnb.de>.

© 2020, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Theaterstraße 13, D-37073 Göttingen
All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means,
electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and
retrieval system, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Typesetting: 3w+p, Rimpär
Printed and bound: Hubert & Co. BuchPartner, Göttingen
Printed in the EU

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage | www.vandenhoeck-ruprecht-verlage.com

ISSN 2197-1137
ISBN 978-3-647-56483-8

To my lovely wife Gabrielle, my son Owen, and my daughter Geneva.

To my students present and future.

To my Covenant head, prophet, priest, king, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Contents

Acknowledgments	11
Author's Preface	13
Assumptions and Presuppositions	16
Purpose, Layout, and Methodology	18
Chapter One: The Early Church and Reprobation	21
The Early Church Fathers (33–325 AD)	21
The Greek Fathers and Latin Fathers	21
Post-Nicene Fathers (326–475 AD)	24
Augustine (354–430 AD)	24
Prosper of Aquitaine (390–455 AD)	29
Lucidus (473 AD)	31
Chapter Two: The Middle Ages and Reprobation	35
Early Middle Ages (476–799 AD)	35
Fulgentius of Ruspe (467–533 AD)	35
The Second Council of Orange (529 AD)	37
Isidore of Seville (560–636 AD)	38
High Middle Ages (800–1299 AD)	39
Gottschalk of Orbais (803–869 AD)	40
Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109 AD)	42
Peter Lombard (1095–1160 AD)	44
Alexander of Hales (1185–1245 AD)	45
Albert the Great (1200–1280 AD)	46
Bonaventure (1217–1274 AD)	47
Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274 AD)	49
Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance (1300–1520 AD)	50
Duns Scotus (1266–1308 AD)	51
William of Ockham (1285–1347 AD)	52

Thomas Bradwardine (1290–1349 AD)	54
Nicholas of Lyra (1270–1349 AD)	55
Gregory of Rimini (1300–1358 AD)	56
Gabriel Biel (1410–1495 AD)	57
John Eck (1486–1543 AD)	58
Chapter Three: The Reformation Period and Reprobation	59
Reformation and Counter-Reformation (1521–1610 AD)	59
Martin Luther (1483–1546 AD)	60
Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531 AD)	64
The Council of Trent (1545–1563 AD)	66
John Calvin (1509–1564 AD)	67
Bellarmine (1542–1621 AD) and Suarez (1548–1617 AD)	70
Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575 AD)	71
Peter Martyr Vermigil (1500–1562 AD)	74
Theodore Beza (1519–1605 AD)	75
John Knox (1513–1572 AD)	77
Jerome Zanchi (1515–1590 AD)	79
Reformed Confessions Prior to the Synod of Dort	80
Chapter Four: The English Reformation and Reprobation	83
The English Reformation (16th and 17th Century)	83
William Perkins (1558–1602 AD)	83
William Whitaker (1548–1595 AD)	85
Cambridge Predestination Controversy (1595 AD)	86
Johann Piscator (1546–1625 AD)	88
Amandus Polanus (1561–1610 AD)	90
Chapter Five: The Synod of Dort and Reprobation	93
Dutch Reformers <i>Nadere Reformatie</i> (1600–1750 AD)	93
Franciscus Junius (1545–1602 AD)	94
Lucas Trelcatius (1542–1602 AD)	96
Franciscus Gomarus (1563–1641 AD)	97
Jacob Arminius (1559–1609 AD)	99
The 1610 Remonstrance	103
The Hague Conference (1611 AD)	104
William Ames (1576–1633 AD)	106
Festus Hommius (1576–1642 AD)	108
Johannes Maccovius (1588–1644 AD)	109
The Second Remonstrance (1617 AD)	111

The Synod of Dort (1618–1619 AD)	113
Summary Remarks Concerning the Historical Development of Reprobation	121
Bibliography	125
Index	151

Acknowledgments

This book is essentially the fruit of the historical research I did for the first section of my PhD dissertation. The process of making this work into a standalone book was done with the help of many. I could not have achieved this task without the sacrifice of so many others who aided me in the process. If you have any benefit from this book, you owe it to the editorial skills of Jack Smith, who labored to read through the manuscript multiple times, spell checking, formatting, and providing critical feedback to make this project possible. Also, for helping me typeset my manuscript, I must thank Anastasia Prinzing; and for indexing and believing in my work, many thanks are due to Alan Quinones. Any errors within are mine alone.

I am indebted to the academic process and the exquisite knowledge and assistance of my local librarian, John Stone, who provided me with a plethora of resources. One of these resources was the dissertation by Donald Sinnema, whose work helped guide my own historical research. I am also thankful for all the libraries that granted me access to rare texts that aided me in my studies. I must also thank my dear friend Mike Riccardi for his support and critical feedback during my doctoral work, which in turn made this work what it is today.

I am grateful to the many scholars who read my manuscript and pushed me toward publication: JV Fesko, Mark Dever, Steve Lawson, and John MacArthur were all very helpful in this regard. I am thankful for my employment at Grace to You, which provided me the time and flexibility to work on this project. And most importantly I am indebted to Phil Johnson, who has been like a spiritual father to me in many ways.

Finally, I am thankful to my wife, who sacrificed more than is reasonable to allow me to pursue my doctoral work, for following me to the ends of the earth, for being my helpmate, best friend, and comforting companion throughout life's earthly trials. Without her, this work would never have seen the light of day.

Soli Deo Gloria

Author's Preface

The historical development of doctrine is vital to understanding each particular doctrine's impact on Christendom. However, when the historical development of any given doctrine is neglected, the result is an underdeveloped theology. Heresies that have already been condemned in church history reemerge when theology is done without an eye to the past. Novelty, which is nothing more than reimagined heresy, takes the place of truth. When studying church history, it is important to remember that not every doctrine is given the same amount of attention within each generation. In fact, doctrinal error is often necessary to force the church to wrestle with issues and mature its previous conclusions (in the form of a counter-response). In this respect, error always lends a hand in developing truth through fire. The doctrine of reprobation is no exception.

The approaches to studying reprobation are many. Biblical commentators and theologians rarely object to God's ordination of good things (cf. Rom 8:28 or 11:36), but when Scripture alludes to the divine ordination of men unto damnation, a wide variety of objections and alternative explanations are offered.¹ The spectrum of interpretations ranges from Open Theism to hyper-Calvinism, with a host of divergent viewpoints in between.

A survey of the various arguments brought against modern day Calvinistic predestination reveals that the primary objection raised by non-Calvinistic critics pertains to the doctrine of reprobation. Thus, it is necessary to investigate this doctrine carefully. While there are many approaches to better understand the

¹ One such serious objection is raised by Roger Olson: "Taken to their logical conclusion, that even hell and all who suffer there eternally are foreordained by God, God is thereby rendered morally ambiguous at best and a moral monster at worst. I have gone so far as to say that this kind of Calvinism, which attributes everything to God's will and control, makes it difficult (at least for me) to see the difference between God and the devil. Some of my Calvinist friends have expressed offense at that, but I continue to believe it is a valid question worth perusing. What I mean is that if I were a Calvinist and believed what these people teach, I would have difficulty telling the difference between God and Satan." Roger Olson, *Against Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 23.

various positions (exegetical, theological, polemical, etc.), there is one approach that helps to put the whole panoply of positions into perspective; this is the historical theological approach. Often people misunderstand the historical theological approach in thinking that it is merely biographical in nature. Or they misuse historical theology by sifting through various historical documents to find people to support their modern position. However, these approaches are not helpful in our practice of historical theology.

Historical theology should be aimed at retrieval, not reinterpretation. Through the retrieval process theologians can make accurate assessments as to what has been historically seen as precise ways to understand the doctrine of reprobation. It is helpful to see where discussions began and how they progressed through reformed thought. This is beneficial to setting helpful boundaries and establishing precise definitions. This in turn allows the modern church to be in communion with its rich history, but it also prevents the church from deviating into heterodoxy or even heresy unintentionally. Yet historical retrieval cannot be done in a merely topical basis without keeping a close eye on other influencing doctrines.

For example, I generally have a host of questions I like to ask new students. These questions will generally pertain to either the atonement or predestination. The reason why I often ask a student what their position is on either of these two doctrines is because these doctrines are what I like to call “plumb-line,” or “capstone doctrines.” The reason this is the case is because whatever view the student presents represents a whole host of conclusions they have made in other related areas of theology. For example, if someone holds to a general atonement as opposed to a particular atonement, they have made assessments regarding many other related issues such as: the extent of the atonement, the purpose of the atonement, the nature of the atonement, God’s sovereignty, predestination, human depravity, the character of God (such as His love and grace), and a host of other doctrines. Doctrinal convictions are always interconnected to other doctrinal convictions. And this is true of every theologian in Church History!

The interconnectedness of theology is important when doing retrieval work in church history. One cannot simply skim through historical works and look for every occurrence of a particular doctrine, that is if they want to get an accurate account of that individual’s theology. Furthermore, other doctrines likely influence their conclusions regarding reprobation. It is important to understand what other doctrines are influencing their conclusions. And that is why throughout this book I try to highlight key thoughts that likely influence the conclusions of various characters and traditions. The most important of which is how theologians differentiate (or don’t differentiate) between the decree of reprobation and its execution. For a proper distinction between *decree* and *execution* will either lead someone to accept a grotesque version of reprobation or

reject the true doctrine of reprobation. So special attention is given to how men define reprobation proper (its parts) and its execution.

Yet, doing retrieval theology is difficult if someone does not recognize their personal presuppositions and influences. In fact, what is difficult for most students of God's Word is that they generally have difficulty removing the sentimentality attached to their presuppositions. They often approach the word of God unaware that they even have presuppositions that need evaluating by the exegetical data yielded from Scripture.

The Reformers did this with the catholic teachings on indulgences, Mary worship, synergistic salvation, and a host of other issues. So, you see our guard rails are not the final authority, they are helpful, yes. They are even necessary! But they need to constantly be tested against Scripture. So that the Scripture, as the London Baptist Confession states (and every confession worth its salt), confesses that our final authority is Scripture and Scripture alone.

Calvinism and reformed theology have been synonymous with the doctrine of predestination since their inception, and they have been ostracized by their opponents primarily because of the necessary corollary of predestination: reprobation.² The perceived distastefulness of the doctrine of reprobation often stems from a failure to distinguish between primary and secondary causality; a distinction necessary to address the objection that reprobation makes God out to be a capricious author of sin. In order to properly explain the doctrine of reprobation's relationship to secondary causality, it is important to identify how the church's understanding of reprobation has developed throughout church history. The progression of nuanced thought from Augustine to seventeenth century reformed orthodoxy is critical for a proper understanding of compatibilism, secondary causality, and God's decree for the non-elect.

This book is intended to be a handbook of the development of the doctrine of reprobation through church history, eventually finding itself a mature fixture of reformed orthodox thought by the seventeenth century. A survey such as this establishes the positive affirmation of reprobation by every generation from Augustine to the Synod of Dort. This will demonstrate the acceptance of the doctrine as a chief point of conviction throughout church history, that it has been neither novel nor marginal. Along the way, major contributors to the develop-

2 For those who claim predestination was not central to Calvin or later Calvinism, see Francois Wendel, *Calvin: the Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (Grand Rapids: Collins, 1976), 263–64; as well as Basil Hall, "Calvin Against the Calvinists," in *John Calvin: A Collection of Distinguished Essays*, ed. G. E. Duffield (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 19–37. Most scholarship proves otherwise. See B.B. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism* (1927; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981); Richard Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1988); and Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982).

ment of the doctrine (both opponents and supporters) will be highlighted. In large part, this will disclose how reprobation has been articulated and defined throughout its development.

The goal in this book is to be as objective as possible. While neutrality is unattainable for any historian or theologian, equity is the intention. Individuals will be allowed to speak for themselves before conclusions are drawn from their words. After an individual's views are summarized and original contributions are presented, charitable scholarship allows for a critique of the perspective in order to draw helpful conclusions.³ So here I would briefly outline my approach and presuppositions for the reader.

Assumptions and Presuppositions

While attempting to be objective, this study assumes several key theological presuppositions. First, it presupposes that God's Word is not silent concerning this topic, and that the church has historically believed God's Word contains the answers concerning this seemingly thorny issue. As William Perkins noted, "If there be an eternal decree of God, whereby he chooseth some men, then there must needs be another whereby he doth pass by others and refuse them."⁴ Such a statement is not merely a logical deduction. Rather, it is predicated on passages of Scripture where God is said to "create" or "prepare" "vessels of wrath prepared for destruction" (Rom 9:22), "appoint men to destruction," (1 Pet 2:8) and mark them "out for condemnation" (Jude 4).

Second, God's Word—not history, emotions, logic, or philosophy—is affirmed as the ultimate authority on this subject. And while retrieval theology is helpful, it is not the final authority on the matter. It is acknowledged that God's Word is neither contrary to the history of God's church, nor detached from human emotion, nor independent of the rules of logic and philosophy. Nevertheless, these are not the chief contributors to the author's conclusions. Scripture alone is the final authority for the establishment of any doctrine. The author affirms and embraces the verbal, plenary, inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. Yet, retrieval theology helps to set the guardrails in the discussion and is richly informative as to how the church has handled the Bible concerning these issues.

Third, God is recognized as impeccably holy. God is the only inherently holy being. He is so holy that holiness is equated with His name (Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8). Not

3 Carl R. Trueman, *Histories and Fallacies: Problems Faced in the Writing of History* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 27–28, 62–68.

4 William Perkins, "Creed of the Apostles," in *The Workes of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins*, ed. John Legatt (London: John Legatt, 1626), 1:287. Hereafter, just *Works*.

only is He holy, but He cannot be the direct agent or cause of any form of sin or temptation (Jas 1:13, 17; 1 John 1:5).

Fourth, God is held to be meticulously sovereign.⁵ God rules over everything, including calamity (Lam 3:38), disaster (Amos 3:6), the casting of lots (Prov 16:33), the hearts of kings (Prov 21:1), and even the crucifixion (Acts 2:23).

Fifth, man is responsible for every act he commits. Man, in his heart, loves sin (John 3:20) and, hates God (Rom 8:7). Thus, he commits iniquity in accordance with his nature (Luke 6:45; John 8:44). The degree of man's culpability is in accordance with his knowledge (Rom 1:19). These final two presuppositions lend themselves to a compatibilist understanding of the human will.⁶ All these presuppositions are highlighted in the Westminster Confession when it states:

God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.⁷

While these convictions may not be held by all who read this work, the author is concerned with presenting the information objectively and faithfully. Acknowledging these theological presuppositions at the forefront allows the book to focus on the primary issue at hand: how the historical development of the articulation of the doctrine of reprobation throughout church history has helpfully expressed precise definitions with great caution and care.

5 A.W. Pink summarizes the Puritan/Reformed definition of God's sovereignty well: "The Sovereignty of the God of Scripture is absolute, irresistible, infinite. When we say that God is Sovereign we affirm His right to govern the universe which He has made for His own glory, just as He pleases. We affirm that His right is the right of the Potter over the clay, i. e., that He may mold that clay into whatsoever form He chooses, fashioning out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor." A.W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (1930; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 21. There is an edition of *The Sovereignty of God* published by Banner of Truth (2009), however, it has omitted important sections related to reprobation (particularly chapter 5) and therefore I could not recommend it over the Baker edition.

6 As opposed to a libertarian understanding of the human will, supported by those of the Arminian persuasion. For those who hold to a compatibilist view of the will see Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J.I. Packer and O.R. Johnston (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1990); John Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defense of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighius*, ed. A.N.S. Lane, trans. G.I. Davies (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996); Jonathan Edwards, *The Freedom of the Will 1, The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Paul Ramsey (1834; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1995). For those of the opposing view, libertarian free will, see Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006); William Lane Craig, *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1999); Norman L. Geisler, *Chosen But Free: A Balanced View of God's Sovereignty and Free Will* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010).

7 Philip Schaff, *Creeeds of Christendom, Volume III: The Creeeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches* (1887; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 3:609.

And a final presupposition of the author is that compatibilism and concurrence are synonymous in reformed thinking. There has been a lengthy discussion between Richard Muller and Paul Helm about the place of Edwards (and compatibilism) within the reformed tradition.⁸ This disagreement only highlights the fact that there are legitimate scholars who disagree about harmony in the reformed/puritan eras due to the diversity found in the Westminster Assembly and even at Dort. Even so, many people have argued (Richard Muller) that "R"eformed is based on what is in the confessions.

And because compatibility versus concurrence—or even particularism versus hypothetical universalism—is not articulated as clearly, scholars sometimes think there is more acceptable diversity than perhaps myself (or Paul Helm do). I do not discredit those who take Muller's view on the issue (I know they are very accomplished and capable theologians), but I cannot help but find disappointment with their conclusion.

Just because there was disagreement on an issue between two theologians rightly called "Puritans/Reformed," does not mean that there is therefore no "Puritan/Reformed" position on this issue. It could be that one Puritan defected from the "Puritan" view on that subject. For example, Baxter's neonomianism does not mean that there was no "Reformed" or "Puritan" view on Justification/atonement just because Baxter could be rightly called Reformed/Puritan.

Those doing recovery work on the reformed diversity are doing important work, but it should be remembered that the dominant views that shaped the tradition for generations was not found in the diversity, but in the unanimity. And thus it is my attempt to show where the unanimity of thought exists between successive generations, as they build upon generations of the past, when unanimity is actually present.

Purpose, Layout, and Methodology

The book aims to retrieve from history a proper definition of reprobation as the church historically has interacted with the biblical texts. Through the book it can be observed that each successive generation builds upon generations before them in their endeavor to harmonize, synthesize and precisely define what the Bible

8 See: Richard A. Muller, "Jonathan Edwards and the Absence of Free Choice: A Parting of Ways in the Reformed Tradition," *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 1, no. 1 (2011): 3–22. The Reply by Paul Helm, "Jonathan Edwards and the Parting of the Ways?," *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 4, no. 1 (2014): 42–60. Muller's reply to Helm, "Jonathan Edwards and Francis Turretin on Necessity, Contingency, and Freedom of Will," *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 4, no. 3 (2014): 266–85. And Helm's final response "Turretin and Edwards Once More," *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 4, no. 3 (2014): 286–296.

teaches concerning predestination. However, at key junctures in history, it is important to highlight new articulations and clarifications to the doctrine of reprobation that come because of other tangential doctrines. This then helps to show how definitions are augmented to take new information into account throughout the centuries. This in turn helps us to properly retrieve the correct doctrine of reprobation from reformed historical thought.

The retrieval of each successive generation will include a summary explanation and survey of pertinent statements by key Christian theologians. Key categories related to or influencing an individual's understanding of reprobation will be examined in greater detail to glean pertinent information regarding that particular influence. In the process, a variety of sources (both primary and secondary) will be consulted, including those from a non-reformed perspective.

While a wide variety of opinions concerning the doctrine of reprobation can be found among commentaries and systematic theologies, it is a doctrine which is often either assumed or outright rejected. Accordingly, the doctrine has received little attention in scholarly literature, despite the fact that it has divided the church since the fourth century. In fact, the dearth of literature on this subject is primarily due to the topic's perceived divisiveness, which has left many to conclude that it is best left to the mysteries of God (Deut 29:29).⁹

The reformed position has been that God's eternal decree of reprobation does not require Him to implant sin into men to guarantee His desired outcome. Rather, God preserves both the volition of the creature and His own holiness by means of secondary causes. It is the intention of this book to help faithful Christians understand reprobation properly and to help them recognize and articulate a proper understanding of reprobation, because this process helps elucidate a vast number of Scripture passages that are often neglected, avoided, or distorted by many in the church. The categorization of secondary causes preserves God's holy sovereignty and man's accountability with respect to the issue of reprobation.

The purpose of this book is two-fold. First, it seeks to gather key thoughts from prominent theologians through each century that influenced the articulation of the reformed doctrine of reprobation. This functions as a sort of mini-encyclopedia of thoughts and the development of thoughts by influential theologians in church history. Second, from this material, it seeks to properly define the doctrine of reprobation. Since the Synod of Dort in 1618, many in Christendom have

⁹ To see a popular level treatment of the history of this debate, see R.C. Sproul, *Willing to Believe: The Controversy over Free Will* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997); Erwin Lutzer, *The Doctrines that Divide: A Fresh Look at the Historic Doctrines that Separate Christians* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998).

been speaking past one another when it comes to this doctrine, simply because adequate care has not been given to defining it historically.

This book then seeks to define, clarify, and explain a reformed view of reprobation against misunderstandings of it by retrieving a proper definition from history by means of tracing the development of reprobation and related doctrines through history.

It is not within the scope of this book to address every issue related to predestination (i. e., providence, election, or the order of the divine decrees).¹⁰ By focusing specifically on the doctrine of reprobation, this book both traces historical progression and helps to establish historical definitions with precision. Furthermore, this book does not seek to exhaustively deal with every opposing view raised against the doctrine of reprobation. Many arguments have been made in modern history, but for the sake of the book objections of conviction by modern opposing views will not be examined, but only those which historically occurred from the time of the Early Church up to the Synod of Dort.

10 With respect to the order of the divine decrees, four major positions stand out. Arminianism, Amyraldism, Infralapsarianism, and Supralapsarianism. The Infra- and Supra- positions are strongly associated with the doctrine of reprobation, which is rejected by the two former positions. For more discussion on Supralapsarianism and Infralapsarianism see Joel R. Beeke, "Did Beza's Suprelapsarianism Spoil Calvin's Theology?," *RTJ* 13 (Nov. 1997): 58–60; Joel R. Beeke, "Theodore Beza's Supralapsarian Predestination," *RRJ* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 69–84; William Hastie, *The Theology of the Reformed Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1904). Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. G.T. Thomson (London: Allen & Unwin, 1978), 147–48. Both Infra- and Supra- camps have argued using various lines in the *Institutes* that Calvin held to their position. However, the debate was in its infant state when he was alive. See William Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1862), 364; Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 292. John Fesko claims that the Westminster Confession confirmed Infralapsarianism as the official Reformed position. See John Fesko, "The Westminster Confession and Lapsarianism: Calvin and the Divines," in *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century. Volume 2: Essays in Remembrance of the 350th Anniversary of the Westminster Assembly*, ed. J. Ligon Duncan (2004; repr., Fern, Scotland: Mentor, 2005), 2:497–501. However, this is not conclusive. The Westminster divines were split on the subject; for example William Twisse, the proctor of the Westminster Assembly, and William Perkins were both adamant Supralapsarians, therefore, the Westminster Standards were left ambiguous on the issue. John Murray states, "The confession is non-committal on the debate between the Supralapsarians and the Infralapsarians and intentionally so, as both the terms of the section and the debate in the Assembly clearly show." Ian H. Murray, ed., *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 4:209.

Chapter One: The Early Church and Reprobation

The Early Church Fathers (33–325 AD)

The early church is unique with respect to the doctrine of reprobation. Before Augustine, there is no refined discussion on predestination. In fact, most early church fathers simply cite biblical texts without expounding on them in much detail. Sinnema summarizes this period:

The Apostolic Fathers did little more than repeat the biblical givens. Simple reflection on the matter began in the context of the early church's struggle to counter Stoic fatalism as well as Manichean and Gnostic dualism. Against the thought of two fixed classes of people, one by nature good and elected to salvation and the other by nature evil and bound for damnation, the early Fathers asserted that good and evil is a matter of the will.¹

The early church taught the depravity of man and his need for grace; however, because of their struggle to combat philosophical Stoicism, fatalism, and dualism, they often attributed too much to man's autonomy.

The Greek Fathers and Latin Fathers

The early Greek and Latin Fathers are often cited by advocates of libertarian free will in order to counter the strong history of predestinarian thought that follows Augustine. Pighius, when he wrote his treatise against Calvin, claimed the early church did not support him. Modern scholarship claims this as well: "This in part explains why Calvin cannot cite ante-Nicene fathers against his libertarian opponents (e. g. Pighius). Hence, when Calvin debates Pighius on the freedom of the

1 Donald W. Sinnema, "The Issue of Reprobation at the Synod of Dort (1618–19) in Light of the History of this Doctrine," (PhD dissertation, University of St. Michael's College: Toronto School of Theology, 1985), 8.

will, he cites Augustine abundantly, but no early church fathers are cited.”² Even Calvin recognized this, but explained its irrelevance, stating, “Further, even though the Greeks above the rest—and Chrysostom especially among them—extol the ability of the human will, yet all the ancients, save Augustine, so differ, waver, or speak confusedly on this subject, that almost nothing certain can be derived from their writings.”³ While Calvin’s assessment that the early church claimed both total depravity and free will as true, what should be pointed out is that there is an absence of any meaningful articulation of the doctrine of predestination. This was particularly because the early church was concentrating on other errors.⁴

Contending against rampant errors like Arianism and Gnosticism, it comes as no surprise that the early church gave little attention to predestination. It should also be noted that the early church’s response to doctrinal error was often done in a pragmatic way, even if for the right reasons. In the case of theodicy, the church often appealed to the notion of free will rather than Scripture. One such example of this is Pseudo-Clement of Rome, who states,

For some things, as we have said, He has so willed to be, that they cannot be otherwise than as they are ordained by Him; and to these He has assigned neither rewards nor punishments; but those which He has willed to be so that they have it in their power to do what they will, He has assigned to them according to their actions and their wills, to earn either rewards or punishments.⁵

Pseudo-Clement, like others after him, rendered God’s foreknowledge of human demerits as the basis for the choice of God to punish the wicked. Ignatius of Antioch likewise stated, “If anyone is truly religious, he is a man of God; but if he is irreligious, he is a man of the devil, made such, not by nature, but by his own choice.”⁶ Justin Martyr, one of the most cited advocates of libertarian free will, stated it this way: “God’s foreknowledge is intuitive, not active, and is caused by man’s choices.”⁷ Quite simply, the emphasis on human freedom in the early

2 Gregory Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 360.

3 Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:259.

4 For example, the various Gnostic errors, Dualism, Docetism, Marcionite error, Unitarian Dynamic Monarchianism, Modalism, Sabellianism, just to name a few.

5 Pseudo-Clement of Rome, “Recognitions of Clement,” in *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: The Twelve Patriarchs, Excerpts and Epistles, the Clementia, Apocrypha, Decretals, Memoirs of Edessa and Syriac Documents, Remains of the First Ages*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. M.B. Riddle, ANF 8 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886), 121.

6 Ignatius of Antioch, “The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians,” in *The Apostolic Fathers: Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. M.B. Riddle, ANF 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903), 61.

7 Justin Martyr, “First Apology,” ANF 1, 177.

church was not a product of discussions regarding compatibilism or predestination, but was merely asserted, as described here by Justin Martyr: “Unless the human race has the power of avoiding evil and choosing good by free choice, they are not responsible for their actions.”⁸

Similar statements can be found in the Latin fathers, in which predestination is said to be based on foreseen merits. According to one, “It is not the part of good and solid faith to refer all things to the will of God[...]as to make us fail to understand that there is something within our power.”⁹ Once again, these statements are in response to Dualism and Gnosticism which sought to remove the culpability of men for sin. This is consistently admitted by church historians. For example Schaff writes:

The Greek, and particularly the Alexandrian fathers, in opposition to the dualism and fatalism of the Gnostic systems, which made evil a necessity of nature, laid great stress upon human freedom, and upon the indispensable cooperation of this freedom with divine grace; while the Latin fathers, especially Tertullian and Cyprian, Hilary and Ambrose, guided rather by their practical experience than by speculative principles, emphasized the hereditary sin and hereditary guilt of man, and the sovereignty of God’s grace, without, however, denying freedom and individual accountability. The Greek church adhered to her undeveloped synergism, which coordinates the human will and divine grace as factors in the work of conversion; the Latin church, under the influence of Augustine, advanced to the system of a divine monergism, which gives God all the glory, and makes freedom itself a result of grace; while Pelagianism, on the contrary, represented the principle of a human monergism, which ascribes the chief merit of conversion to man, and reduces grace to a mere external auxiliary. After Augustine’s death, however the intermediate system of Semi-Pelagianism, akin to the Greek synergism, became prevalent in the West.¹⁰

The context of heresies that persisted in the early church shaped their discussion of doctrinal issues, as it does in every generation. However, it should be noted that their perspectives on free will were in contrast to Gnosticism/Dualism--not in relation to predestination. Within this theological context, the early church expressed that God’s punishment of sinners was always on account of their volitional acts of sin.

8 Justin Martyr, “First Apology,” *ANF* 1, 177.

9 Tertullian, “On Exhortation to Chastity,” *ANF* 4, 50–51.

10 Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1867) 3:786.

Post-Nicene Fathers (326–475 AD)

The doctrine of predestination makes a formal debut into church dogmatics between the fourth and fifth centuries. This period, designated as the “Post-Nicene Fathers,” signifies the point in time immediately following the historic Council of Nicea (325 AD), a council in which the church set grounds for orthodoxy concerning Christ and the Trinity. Perhaps more significantly, this council also helped in establishing how rules of authority would be determined for orthodox discussions on doctrine. Various scholars have noticed this in the early Post-Nicene eras. When it comes to the doctrine of predestination, there are few periods of history that have had more lasting impact than the Post-Nicene era. Aside from the Protestant Reformation (built in large part on the shoulders of Augustine, which is demonstrated by their citation of him above all other theologians), this period has much to say concerning predestination. Philip Schaff summarizes the emergence of predestination on the theological landscape of the church when he writes:

But up to the time of Augustine the doctrine had never been an object of any very profound inquiry, and had therefore never been accurately defined, but only very superficially and casually touched. The Greek fathers, and Tertullian, Ambrose, Jerome, and Pelagius, had only taught a conditional predestination, which they made dependent on the foreknowledge of the free acts of men. In this, as in his views of sin and grace, Augustine went far beyond the earlier divines, taught an unconditional election of grace, and restricted the purpose of redemption to a definite circle of the elect, who constitute the minority of the race.¹¹

With that in mind, there are three prominent figures which can be seen in the Post-Nicene era: Augustine, Prosper of Aquitaine, and Lucidus.

Augustine (354–430 AD)

Augustine of Hippo’s writings have had widespread influence on the development of Western Christianity and Western philosophy. In fact, his impact was so great that the Protestant Reformation points back to him as the means through which they rediscovered central Protestant doctrines.¹² Augustine’s insight into

11 Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 3:735.

12 B.B. Warfield points out, “[I]t is Augustine who gave us the Reformation. For the Reformation, inwardly considered, was just the ultimate triumph of Augustine’s doctrine of grace over Augustine’s doctrine of the Church.” B.B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1954), 322.

the doctrines of original sin and predestination are among his greatest theological contributions.

The doctrinal contributions of Augustine were in large part a result of his interactions with Pelagius. Pelagius believed that man was born good; he denied the concept of original sin, predestination, and asserted that the human will and nature was not influenced by Adam's sin. As a result of these arguments Augustine developed his doctrine of predestination and the inability of the human will to respond to God in matters of salvation.¹³

Regarding the doctrine of reprobation, Augustine was the first to explain it in detail. Scholars have noted that Augustine's position underwent a change between his early writings and his later debates with Pelagius.¹⁴ However, Augustine's position did not change dramatically; rather, his position matured through these debates as his understanding of Romans 9 increased. This later understanding led him to the assertion that foreknowledge was not an acceptable way to discuss predestination.¹⁵ Augustine's position on predestination and reprobation begins with his understanding of original sin: as a consequence of Adam's

13 Pelagius was cleared by a Jerusalem synod, and he was again acquitted by a synod of bishops at Diospolis in 415 AD (both in the East). Pope Innocent I excommunicated Pelagius in 417 AD, but Pope Zosimus lifted the ban. He reinstated it in 418 AD. Popes Boniface and Sixtus III rejected appeals from Pelagian supporters to have him reinstated. In addition to his excommunication, two councils in Africa condemned him in 416 AD on the basis of his book on free will. He was also barred from Palestine by a synod in Antioch in 424 AD. See Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., "Excursus on Pelagianism," *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church*, NPNF² 14 (1900; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 230; Earle E. Cairns and J.D. Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 761. For summaries of Pelagius's doctrine, see R.C. Sproul, *Willing to Believe: The Controversy over Free Will* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 33–48; Lutzer, *The Doctrines that Divide*, 153–62. William G.T. Shedd summarizes Pelagius' theology: "At birth, each man's physical nature is liable to disease and death, as was Adam's at creation; and, at birth, each man's voluntary faculty, like Adam's at creation, is undetermined either to sin or holiness. Being thus characterless, with a will undecided either for good or evil, and not in the least affected by Adam's apostasy, each individual man, after birth, commences his own voluntariness, originates his own character, and decides his own destiny, by the choice of either right or wrong." William G.T. Shedd, *A History of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1863), 2:94.

14 See Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 400–10; Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub., 2002), 176–82. Augustine notices his own shift in the articulation of his position in *The Retractions*, trans. Sister Mary Inez Bogan, vol. 60, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1968), 96–100 (§1.22.2–4).

15 Augustine, "Miscellany of Questions in Response to Simplician," in *Responses to Miscellaneous Questions*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, vol. 1, no. 12, *The Works of Saint Augustine* (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 2008), 189 (§2.5).