

**DISPUTE OVER THE PREORDINATION OF HUMAN
SALVATION, ITS FOUNDATIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE
DURING THE CAROLINGIAN RENAISSANCE**

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This article focuses, within a certain, limited scope, on one of the fundamental problems of Christian theology and philosophy, the relationship between the principle of God's unlimited omnipotence and the principle of human free will and thus responsibility for the conduct of the human individual. This question was a core theme of the concluding phase of development in the thought of Aurelius Augustinus (St. Augustine) and the subject of a passionate dispute during the subsequent last decades of development of late antique Christian theology and philosophy. In the period following the collapse of the Roman Empire, its urgency receded into the background in the face of the tasks of ensuring the very survival of Christian thought and the Christian literary culture.¹

In the 9th century, however, this problem resurfaced, entirely unexpectedly for all the then leading figures of the high period of the Carolingian Renaissance, due to the endeavours of a single author, namely a Saxon monk, Gottschalk of Orbais. His appearance is a symptom of the maturing of European thought once again from the phase of the mechanical preservation of the antique tradition towards a reflection on its key problems, and marks the beginning of the renewal of the independent development of Western European Christian theology and philosophy.

The article attempts derives its arguments chiefly from the fundamental primary texts, which in the early Middle Ages (and later) were of determining significance for the dispute regarding the predestination of human salvation, thus essentially also texts of antique origin. This contribution does not intend in any way to assess the solution of this problem in later Christian theology and its impact on teaching of modern Christian churches – the author does not feel sufficiently qualified to comment on such matters and does not feel the vocation for it.

**I. Cultural context of the dispute over
the predestination of human salvation
during the Carolingian era**

The phenomenon of the “Carolingian Renaissance” is one of the most important factors which influenced the development of European civilisation into the form in which it persists to this day. In this article, I take the liberty of linking back to the stated opinion

¹ Riché (1995).

that the beginning of the formation of Europe, in the medieval and modern meaning of this conception, did not occur until the rise of the Carolingian Empire at the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries, following the disintegration of the unity of the Mediterranean region under attacks from Islam.²

If it is still possible to consider this conception to be useful to a certain extent, this in no way expresses its self-perception of this historical period. Its traditional term, the “period of the Carolingian Renaissance”, characterises a concept which is commonplace in the interpretation of its history and in modern scholarship, but in no way characterises the goal set for themselves by the leading figures within the church and their educated but mostly illiterate secular rulers – namely, to renew the continuity of Christian civilisation and the Latin-speaking Christian church with its antique past, thus salvaging the church’s function as the mediator of human salvation.

Over the course of the five decades of the period, (very roughly speaking between 780–830), this goal was attained. The territory of the Frankish Empire was again covered by a relatively dense network of monasteries and collegiate schools with well-stocked libraries of manuscripts, containing all the Latin texts of the Roman literature that had survived the period of the migration of the nations.³ The teachers and students at these schools were (certainly within their elite minority) capable of working with, interpreting and paraphrasing these manuscripts without the slightest problem in their own intellectual activities and literary work. As a result, the cultural elite of the Carolingian Empire of the 1st half of the 9th century operated within an atmosphere of cultural and historical optimism, which intellectual life had not enjoyed since the period of the “adoptive” Roman emperors of the 2nd century after Christ. The receptively mastered Latin Patristic theology formed on the basis of the reliably fixed system of “free arts”, resuscitated in the late antique form of the 4th–6th centuries, seemed to provide a consistent and unshakable fundament for ecclesiastical practice, pastoral care, individual devotion and even the tools of power of secular rulers. As a result, these rulers were willing to accept cultivated and highly educated representatives of the church of the time as their consultants and assistants in the administration of the Christian Ecumene. The example of Alcuin

² The author of this conception is Pirenne (2005). This conception was however repeatedly disputed in the post-war period; the most respected support for these objections came from Durliat (1990), according to whose conception the continuity of State forms and institutions lasted from antiquity until the disintegration of the Carolingian cultural and State unity at the beginning of the 10th century. In the field of culture, however, it is not possible to cast doubt upon the deep caesura of the Merovingian period, which was spanned by the Carolingian Renaissance and thus created the conditions for the continuation of the existence of Western European culture for future centuries, up to the present day.

³ Though it may be said that the specific form of this cultural-historical phenomenon of preserving the written evidence of antique civilisation is still shrouded in mystery to this day; the manner by which the literary education of the Carolingian era was propagated (Butzer 1997) nevertheless remains and evidently shall remain unexplained as to where the Carolingian scriptoria found the no longer preserved originals of the copies of primarily pre-Christian, but also less disseminated late antique Christian authors which have survived to this day (Riché 1995, Courcelle 1964). It is unquestionable that these old manuscripts of the later Roman era were, also in later centuries, available in the manuscript collections of the Apennine peninsula, but the Frankish church and the Carolingian dynasty did not enjoy harmonious relationships with this region at the beginning of the Carolingian Renaissance. The cultivated environment of the churches of the British Isles may have had a considerable influence, but this influence was evidently romantically over-emphasised in the older literature (Blair 1990).

(735–804), a companion of Charlemagne, and his works,⁴ compiling with the confidence of a polymath the fundamentals of the free arts, theology and biblical exegesis, may even come across as banal. His pupils, and his pupils' pupils shaped the cultural and religious life of Carolingian Europe until the end of the 9th century.

Into this environment, which was sure of his education, his mission and the possibilities of his salvation, came the ideas of a nonconformist and boldly challenging monk from Orbais:

“I, Gottschalk, believe, profess, declare, take as my witness God the Father, through the medium of God the Son and in the Holy Spirit, and I insist and confirm face to face with God and the saints, that there exists a twofold predestination, a predestination of those chosen for eternal life and of the damned for eternal death. Since God, who is not subject to changes, entirely on the basis of his own will and irrevocable decision, predestined all his chosen ones for eternal life before the world began, and similarly predestined all the damned, who on the Day of Judgement shall receive the punishment for their sins, for the just sentence of their deserved eternal death.”⁵

At that time, Gottschalk of Orbais had long been a well-known figure to a range of ecclesiastical figures of the Carolingian Europe, but not exclusively as a theologian, and certainly not as a respected theologian. Many years earlier, in the year 829, in the trial against his Abbot of the Fulda monastery, Rabanus Maurus, he had won exemption from the monk's oath to which his parents had committed him in his childhood in accordance with the customs of the time, but did not manage to enforce the return of the property which was his monk's endowment, and evidently did not await the ruling on the appeal which his opponent filed against the judgement.⁶ In any case, in the end he remained faithful to his monk's oath, but took advantage of his partial victory in the trial in order to reside in various monasteries in Eastern France, where he was ordained (evidently in a not entirely canonical procedure) as a priest. He travelled throughout Europe, also visiting the pagan Bulgarian Khanate, and spent a number of years in northern Italy, primarily in the Duchy of Friuli, where he supplemented the education he had acquired in his youth in two of the most prestigious centres of learning in the East Frankish Empire, the monasteries of Fulda and Reichenau. During his residence in Friuli in Italy, he began to gain renown as a preacher of the twofold predestination of human souls, by which, according to his opponents, he sapped the morale of believers

⁴ The complete compendium remains available only in *PL* 100–101.

⁵ *Ego Gotteschalcus credo et confiteor, profiteor et testifcor, ex Deo Patre per Deum Filium, in Deo Spiritu sancto, et affirmo atque approbo coram Deo et sanctis ejus quod gemina est praedestinatio sive electorum ad requiem, sive reprobatorum ad mortem. Quia sicut Deus incommutabilis ante mundi constitutionem omnes electos suos incommutabiliter per gratuitam gratiam suam praedestinavit ad vitam aeternam; similiter omnino omnes reprobos qui in die iudicii damnabuntur propter ipsorum mala merita, idem ipse incommutabilis Deus per justum iudicium suum incommutabiliter praedestinavit ad mortem merito sempiternam.* Quoted in the year 848 by Hincmarus Remensis, *De praedestinatione* 5.

⁶ Vielhaber (1956: 15–16). Despite its age, this work provides a more reliable overview of the information about Gottschalk's life. Devisse (1976: 115–279) presents an exceptional wealth of factual information, but he takes sides heavily against Gottschalk and with Hincmar of Reims, who is portrayed as virtually a hero without fear or blame in this otherwise excellent historical work. Nineham (1989) merely coherently summarises the information from both the above-named authors. Boller, *Gottschalk d'Orbais de Fulda à Hautvillers: une dissidence* (Paris 2004) was unfortunately inaccessible to me.

and of ecclesiastical pastoral care. As a result, in the year 848, Gottschalk came to the Synod of Mainz in order to exonerate himself against accusations of heresy, and was entirely convinced of his case.⁷

II. New Testament and antique points of departure in the dispute concerning predestination

The theory that the faithful had been predetermined for salvation has firm roots in the New Testament. Its oldest form is clearly represented by mentions in the Book of Revelation of the Book of Life (Apc 3, 5; 20, 12; 21, 27), which evidently connects in a certain manner to the Middle Eastern “books of fate”⁸. These passages, however, indicate at least partially that the “Book of Life”, as well as similar parallel records mentioned by the author of the Book of Revelation (there is no explicit mention of a “book of the damned”), in the hands of God, lists the actions of individuals, the value of which shall be weighed and for which these individuals shall be judged or rewarded, and so the sense of predestination may be challenged by these documents. The words of the Gospel of John: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand”⁹ may be interpreted more in the sense of the irrevocable predestination of the just.

However, the pillar of all Christian conceptions of predestination for salvation is the key passage of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 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.”¹⁰ The entire chapters 8, 9 and 10 of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans are devoted to the hope of Paul’s listeners, that despite their insignificance, despite their dwindling numbers, despite their vulnerability, despite the fact that the Israelites, God’s chosen people, had not abided by their obligations (chapter 10 of this letter), despite all of this God’s plan for salvation was rested on their select few. The theory of predestination for salvation, in this environment and in this time was thus not a stultifying call to fatalism, but rather perhaps an essential source of succour within the desperate position of the flocks of Paul’s devotees, for whom the fact that, in the face of the scorn and violence of their surrounding environment, they had decided to believe in the Gospel, could and must have been a reassurance that predestination for salvation had fallen precisely upon them.

⁷ Vielhaber (1956: 22), Rädle (1981: 190).

⁸ *DThC* 2811.

⁹ τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἐμὰ τῆς φωνῆς μου ἀκούουσιν, καὶ γὰρ γινώσκω αὐτὰ καὶ ἀκολουθοῦσίν μοι, καὶ γὰρ δίδωμι αὐτοῖς ζωὴν αἰώνιον καὶ οὐ μὴ ἀπόλωνται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ οὐχ ἄρπασει τις αὐτὰ ἐκ τῆς χειρὸς μου. John 10, 27–28.

¹⁰ οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν. ὅτι οὓς προέγνω, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνης τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς· οὓς δὲ προώρισεν, τούτους καὶ ἐκάλεσεν· καὶ οὓς ἐκάλεσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδικαίωσεν· οὓς δὲ ἐδικαίωσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδόξασεν. Rom 8, 28–30.

The authority of the New Testament and the Apostle Paul however had the consequence that these ideas, expressed in the specific situation of the earliest period of Christianity, could not be dispensed with even in later periods. In the times of the Apostolic Fathers and the apologists of the first two centuries, the situation of the Christian minorities in Mediterranean cities had not changed in comparison with Paul's times to such an extent that the Apostle's fatalism concerning predestination would give rise to uncertainty with regard to the sense of good deeds. The Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians (at the turn of the 1st and 2nd centuries) states entirely in the spirit of Paul: "And so we, having been called through His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified through ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety or works which we wrought in holiness of heart, but through faith, whereby the Almighty God justified all men that have been from the beginning."¹¹

During the 2nd century these opinions are still forceful within the Christian community. The apologist St. Justin of Neapolis (today Nablus in Palestine; ?-165?) states entirely clearly that "And that God the Father of all would bring Christ to heaven after He had raised Him from the dead, and would keep Him there until He has subdued His enemies the devils, and until the number of those who are foreknown by Him as good and virtuous is complete, on whose account He has still delayed the consummation – hear what was said by the prophet David."¹²

However, in the period shortly following, when the enemy of Christianity is no longer merely state violence and profane philosophy but also gnostic theosophical currents and Manichaeism, bordering on Christianity and sometimes also ensuing from Christianity, this fatalism with regard to salvation ceases to be a weapon and source of support, but now weakens the polemical capability of the Christian authors. It comes into dangerous proximity with the gnostic conception of the predestination of every mortal to one of a number of types of human beings, which, according to the degree of their contamination by degraded matter, can expect a further cycle in the darkness of the world or on the contrary a certain, in fact radical ascension through the emanative degrees of godship. The most significant Christian polemic with gnosticism, Irenaeus of Lyon (2nd half of the 2nd century) suddenly feels compelled to defend the freedom of human decision: "not only in his actions, but also in his faith, the Lord preserves the free and full will of Man to decide with the words 'And as thou hast believed, [so] be it done unto thee'" (Mt 8, 13).¹³ Here he fears that the irrevocable predestination of Man would also compromise the omnipotence of God: "Those who deny this make of the Lord a forlorn being, as if he were not able to accomplish anything he wished, or on the contrary could not com-

¹¹ Καὶ ἡμεῖς οὖν, διὰ θελήματος αὐτοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ κληθέντες, οὐ δι' ἑαυτῶν δικαιοῦμεθα οὐδὲ διὰ τῆς ἡμετέρας σοφίας ἢ συνέσεως ἢ εὐσεβείας ἢ ἔργων ἃν κατεργασάμεθα ἐν δσιότητι καρδίας, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς πίστεως, δι' ἧς πάντας τοὺς ἀπ' αἰῶνος ὁ παντοκράτωρ θεὸς ἐδικαίωσεν. Clemens Romanus, *Ep. I ad Cor.* 32, 4, 1–6.

¹² Ὅτι δὲ ἀγαγεῖν τὸν Χριστὸν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ὁ πατὴρ τῶν πάντων θεὸς μετὰ τὸ ἀναστήσαι ἐκ νεκρῶν αὐτὸν ἐμελλε, καὶ κατέχειν ἕως ἄν πατάξῃ τοὺς ἐχθραίνοντας αὐτῷ δαίμονας, καὶ συντελεσθῇ ὁ ἀριθμὸς τῶν προεγνωσμένων αὐτῷ ἀγαθῶν γινομένων καὶ ἐναρέτων, δι' οὓς καὶ μηδέπω τὴν ἐπικύρωσιν πεποιήται, ἐπακούσατε τῶν εἰρημένων διὰ Δαυεὶδ τοῦ προφήτου. Iustinus, *Apologia prima* 45, 1.

¹³ *Et tantum non in operibus, sed etiam in fide liberum et suae potestatis arbitrium hominis servavit Dominus, dicens 'Secundum fidem tuam fiat tibi'.* Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 4, 26, 5.

prehend the nature of mortals and their inability to accept the divine gift of integrity.”¹⁴ Irenaeus thus holds the sole possible antithesis of impersonal *fata* to be the free will of human decision, which may be the object of the manifestation of the almighty power of God. Although it is evident from a historical perspective that this concept generates more problems than it solves, Irenaeus does not feel the potential and categorically essential conflict between the will of God and the free will of Man to be a problem. This is evidently because his attention is absorbed by a polemic with a conception of an impersonal *fata*, against which he posits an evangelical conception of God – Christ, that leaves to human will the power of judgement and the possibility of defiance, as he demonstrates by the quote from Mt 23, 37: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, ... how often would I have gathered thy children ... and ye would not!”¹⁵ Irenaeus evidently did not realise that in this he jeopardized the conception of the omnipotence of God more than his gnostic opponents.

It was precisely Irenaeus however, together with other Christian polemicists of the 2nd century, who can be credited to a large extent for the fact that conceptions of the inferiority of the biblical God as against the impersonal spiritual principle of the cosmos were forced back into the environment of the sparse array of gnostic sects. From the 3rd century onwards, the question of the essence of the biblical God of the Old Testament and Christ of the New Testament then entered the realm of neo-Platonic philosophical deduction, which was brought into a Christian environment by the catechetical school of Alexandria (Pantaenus †200, Clement 150?–216?, Origen 185?–254). In this process the problem of balancing the pre-philosophical biblical conceptions of God’s being and the logical systems of demands ensuing from the attributes necessary for a God of theological abstraction once again escalated. In later centuries, Christian thought viewed Origen’s solution to these contradictions as unorthodox and frequently heretical, nevertheless his influence and inspiration enabled the foremost representatives of Greek Patristic theology of the 4th and 5th centuries (Basil 330?–379, Gregory of Nazianzus 330–390, Gregory of Nyssa 335–394, Athanasius 295?–373) to resolve the fundamental problems of this original conflict between the biblical message and Greek ontological thought to such a satisfactory degree for the coexistence of individual Christian faith and the necessity of theological abstraction, that the councils of Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 380 were able to codify the dogma, recognised by all Christian denominations to this day, of the Trinity principle of God’s being, and the councils of Ephesus in 431 and Chalcedon in 451 were able to do the same for the dogma of the coexistence of the divine and human form within the person of the Son of God. It was not until the end of the 20th century that certain theologians conceded the objection that even the structure of the message of the Gospel had been altered to a certain and considerable extent by this “Hellenization” of the contents of the Bible.¹⁶

Although the influence of Origen was recognised only unwillingly in later centuries by Christian theologians due to the unorthodox presumptuousness of many of his ideas, it is precisely Origen who resolved the problem of the relationship between human will and God’s omnipotence so successfully for the Greek Patristic tradition that this problem was

¹⁴ *Qui autem his contraria dicunt, ipsi impotentem introducunt Dominum, scilicet quasi non potuerit perficere hoc, quod voluerit, aut rursus ignorantem natura choicos, ut ipsi dicunt, et eos, qui non possunt accipere eius incorruptelam. Ibid. 4, 27, 6.*

¹⁵ Ἱερουσαλήμ Ἱερουσαλήμ, ποσάκις ἠθέλησα ἐπσυναγαγεῖν τὰ τέκνα σου, καὶ οὐκ ἠθελήσατε. Ibid. 4, 26, 5.

¹⁶ Heinzmann (2008: 17–20).

virtually excluded from the further development of Greek Christian thought. Origen succeeded to the extent, as far as this was feasible with regard to the canonical text, of diluting the fatalistic impression of the aforementioned statements of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans. He states that “To the essence of God, which is everywhere and from which nothing is exempt, nothing can remain concealed, but the perception of evil or the awareness of it in the future is not worthy of God.”¹⁷ As a result, the words of the Apostle Paul on the predestination of the chosen does not relate to the whole of humanity, and his identification of the just does not simultaneously mean a damning of those not identified: “From that which we have stated above, it ensues that God did not in advance occupy a position with regard to those whom he did not choose.”¹⁸ Thus Origen may very emphatically proclaim: “To the souls which He created, the Creator granted free and voluntary judgement, so that the good which is pertinent to them may ensue, if it is supported by their own good will.”¹⁹ God did not judge on the cosmos in a single moment once and for ever, His creative activity is continuous and His omniscience is manifested rather retrospectively than as a cause of what He knows in advance: “What happens, does not happen because God knows it in advance; He knows it in advance, because it shall happen.”²⁰ Even Origen however reserves for God the greater proportion in all the good of which the human spirit may be capable: “So then neither is he that plants anything, neither he that finishes it; but God that gives the increase.”²¹ Shortly after this statement, however, he adds a simile which is capable of providing the Christian with faith in his own endeavours – the fate of the ship in a storm is in the hands of God, nevertheless the sailors are obliged to do what is within their power and not to wait passively for God’s judgement.²² Between God and human conduct there thus emerges a certain synergy, in which human will is not insignificant.

After Irenaeus, Western theology did not emphatically engage in question regarding the compatibility of the omnipotence of God and human free will for several decades, even though discussions took place on this theme in Christian communities also in the West. A document of this is the brief mention by St. Jerome of Stridon in a letter to St. Paulinus of Nola,²³ which refers precisely to chapter 9 of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans and asks Jerome whether the Apostle’s text denies the possibility of human free will. Without regard to his fierce dispute with many of Origen’s opinions, Jerome responds in this case with an explicit reference precisely to Origen’s resolution of the issue in question, and recommends to the addressee that he rely upon this, since even in Origen it is possible to find many useful ideas.

Until the time shortly preceding Jerome’s cited letter, Aurelius Augustinus (St. Augustine) also relied on the resolution defined by Origen at the end of the 4th century, which was

¹⁷ *Non quod aliquid latere possit illam naturam, quae ubique est et nusquam deest, sed quia omne, quod malum est, scientia eius vel praescientia habetur indignum.* Origenes, *Commentarius in epistolam Ad Romanos* 7, 7.

¹⁸ *Invenitur enim, secundum hoc, quod supra exposuimus, non praescisse Deus quos non praedestinavit.* *Ibid.* 7, 8.

¹⁹ *Voluntarios enim et liberos motus a se conditis mentibus Creator indulsit, quo scilicet bonum in eis proprium fieret, cum id voluntate propria servaretur.* Origenes, *De principiis* 2, 9, 2.

²⁰ *Non propterea erit aliquid, quia id scit Deus esse futurum, sed quia futurum est, scitur a Deo, antequam fiat.* Origenes, *Commentarius in epistolam Ad Romanos* 7, 8.

²¹ *Καὶ ἡ ἡμετέρα τελείωσις οὐχὶ μηδὲν ἡμῶν πραξάντων γίνεται, οὐ μὴν ἀφ’ ἡμῶν ἀπαρτίζεται, ἀλλὰ θεὸς τὸ πολὺ ταύτης ἐνεργεῖ.* Origenes, *De principiis* 3, 1, 18.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Hieronymus, *Ep.* 85, 3. The letter is usually attributed to the year 399 (*DThC* 2830).

accepted as a matter of course and without reflection by the Christian elites of the Western Roman Empire. In his “early philosophical period”,²⁴ Augustine engaged in the problem of human free will virtually without linking to its relationship towards the sovereign will of God, and expressed a firm conviction of its autonomy, without which the existence of evil would not be possible. Even in the work *De vera religione* (written in the years 389–391) he utters the words of which his opponents would maliciously remind him in disputes in the later part of his life: “If that defect, which is called sin, attacked against the will (of the afflicted) as a fever, the punishment, which afflicts the sinner and is called damnation, would be unjust. But a sin is only a sin in as much as it is voluntary; a sin is not committed unless it is voluntary. This is so obvious that it is agreed upon by both the small community of the educated and by the masses of the uneducated.”²⁵ This opinion, in the years of his accommodation with Christianity, provided him with support against the fatalism of the Manichaeans.²⁶ He resolutely insists upon the freedom of human will also in certain passages of the work *De libero arbitrio* (from the year 388): “What is within the power of will more than will itself?”²⁷ However, the problem of the relationship of the omniscience of God and human free will surfaces also in Augustine’s work, and his responses are equally as feeble and logically inconsistent as those of the previous Greek Christian tradition: “Although God knows our future acts of free judgement in advance, it does not ensue from this that our volition would not be voluntary. ... You are not prevented from your will to be blessed, when you begin to be so, by the fact that God knows of this in advance, because today already He is sure that you shall be blessed; and similarly the will to commit sin, should it appear within you, is no less (your free) will, because God knows in advance that it shall appear.”²⁸

It is however useful at this point to remind the reader that in this work, which may be understood as a manifesto for Augustine’s faith in the freedom of human will, he somewhat inadvertently prepares one of the fundamental elements of his later argument, which espoused entirely the opposite message, since in this work he affirms the opinion known in Christian theology as *traducianism*, i.e. that the soul of each human individual is derived from the soul of Adam, which was the only soul created by God from the beginning, whilst all other human souls maintain an uninterrupted continuity with it and inherit its qualities and sins: “And furthermore, who may say that he does not sin if only one soul has been created, from which the souls of all people derive their origin at the moment of their birth, and if this first man has sinned?”²⁹

The aforementioned compromise solution however could not satisfy the intellect of Augustine’s format for long. In addition, beginning in the year 391, his role in life changed

²⁴ Flash (1980: 100).

²⁵ *Defectus autem iste quod peccatum vocatur, si tanquam febris invitum occuparet, recte injusta poena videretur, quae peccantem consequitur, et quae damnatio nuncupatur. Nunc vero usque adeo peccatum voluntarium est malum, ut nullo modo sit peccatum, si non sit voluntarium; et hoc quidem ita manifestum est, ut nulla hinc doctorum paucitas, nulla indoctorum turba dissentiat.* Aug., *De vera religione* 14, 27.

²⁶ Aug., *Confessiones* 13, 2–3.

²⁷ *Quid enim tam in voluntate, quam ipsa voluntas sita est?* Aug., *De libero arbitrio* 1, 12, 26.

²⁸ *Quamvis praesciat Deus nostras voluntates futuras, non ex eo tamen conficitur ut non voluntate aliquid velimus. ... Sicut autem voluntatem beatitudinis, cum esse coeperis beatus, non tibi aufert praescientia Dei, quae hodieque de tua futura beatitudine certa est: sic etiam voluntas culpabilis, si qua in te futura est, non propterea voluntas non erit, quoniam Deus eam futuram esse praescivit.* *Ibid.* 3, 3, 7.

²⁹ *Deinde, si una anima facta est, ex qua omnium hominum animae trahuntur nascentium, quis potest dicere non se peccasse, cum primus ille peccavit?* *Ibid.* 3, 20, 56.

entirely. In that year he was ordained a priest and in 395³⁰ a bishop. This naturally resulted in also to the distinctly increased respect which he demonstrates in his considerations to the authority of the Church and the Bible,³¹ whereas in his early works up to the year 389 he appeared rather as a Neo-Platonist who sympathised with Christianity (this position attenuates following his Christening in 387). Up to this point the authority of the Church had not in any way restricted Augustine in his considerations on the question of the relationship of free will and faith in an omnipotent and omniscient God, however, the authority of the Bible, if it was to be understood as categorically binding, required an unequivocal solution to this question excluding all compromises.

However, it was not explicitly laid down as to which conception of the mutually antithetical biblical authorities should prevail in the theology of salvation. In the New Testament there are several passages which speak of the importance of good deeds for increasing the hope of the individual who performs them. As the most striking passage of this kind it is possible to quote the Epistle of James: “What [doth it] profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”³²

However, Augustine chose an entirely antithetical conception of the 8th and 9th chapters of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans.³³ Still in 394 he attempted in a certain manner to sustain a harmony with the general contemporary conception of the problem, stating: “That we believe is our own merit; that we perform good deeds however is the merit of He who bestows the Holy Spirit upon those who believe in Him.”³⁴ But only a few rows above this, he undermines any support for his compromise with the statement “Upon those about whom [God – J. K.] foreknows that they shall believe in Him, He shall choose to bestow the Holy Spirit.”³⁵ Augustine’s tendency towards radical Christian fatalism is already manifested as insurmountable after a few years of service as a priest within the church.

This fatalism, however, was not inevitably pessimistic. It was sufficient to appeal to another significant declaration of the Apostle Paul: “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”³⁶ This conception also, if all its consequences were taken into account, would also deny the freedom of human will without exception.

³⁰ This date is not indisputable, the period between the years 395–397 is considered (Neumann 1998: 32).

³¹ Flash (1980: 117–120).

³² Τί τὸ ὄφελος, ἀδελφοί μου, ἐὰν πίστιν λέγῃ τις ἔχειν ἔργα δὲ μὴ ἔχη; μὴ δύναται ἡ πίστις σώσαι αὐτόν; ... ὁρᾶτε ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων δικαιούται ἄνθρωπος καὶ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως μόνον. Jas 2, 14.24. It is no surprise that Martin Luther named the Epistle of James the “straw epistle”, because it stands as a great obstacle in the path of his theology of *sola fide*.

³³ See note 10. Modern theology also interprets his words as meaning that Pavel professes here the salvation of all Christians, because through the incarnation of Christ they have taken on the position of the chosen people of Israel. This conception is summarised and defended for example by Boublik (1961: 27–49). In Christian theology of antiquity and the Middle Ages however this is not substantiated, therefore it has no significance for the argument of this article.

³⁴ *Quod ergo credimus, nostrum est: quod autem bonum operamur, illius qui credentibus in se dat Spiritum sanctum.* Aug., *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistula ad Romanos* 60.

³⁵ *Quem sibi crediturum esse praescivit, ipsum elegerit cui Spiritum sanctum daret.* *Ibid.*

³⁶ Τοῦτο καλὸν καὶ ἀπόδεκτον ἐνώπιον τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ, ὃς πάντας ἀνθρώπους θέλει σωθῆναι καὶ εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν. 1 Tm 2, 3–4. The apocryphal origin of this Epistle of Paul, which is recognised as highly probable if not certain by modern biblical studies of all religious denominations, could not be taken into consideration in theological discussions until the 19th century.

Augustine chose another path and embarked upon it unusually quickly. One year after his ordination as bishop, he sent a discourse³⁷ to the Milanese bishop Simplician, which in one part brings about an absolute watershed in the development of antique philosophy and Christian theology. The problem of the relationship of human free will and God's omniscience disappears. Due to the guilt of original sin, of which every member of the human race bears an indelible proportion, the individual is not capable of earning his own salvation. God's justice rightly condemns all human individuals, including newborn babies, to damnation, and Man has no right to question the sense of this. Humanity is *massa peccati*. From this there shall be exceptions of isolated mortals, who shall be redeemed not due to the virtue of their Christian life, but because God has granted them mercy, to which they have no right and which is an exception to the rule of damnation.

Augustine did not alter this conception until the end of his life, but merely adjusted and sharpened it. Through its formulation he rejected the validity of the antique conception of human morality as a result of conscious human self-improvement and the conception of the human spirit as an entity which is capable, on the basis of its own decision, of transcending the boundaries of the material world and attaining, at least with a fleeting touch, the perfect spiritual world.³⁸ Augustine thus defined Man in a new manner as a helpless tool of the absolute authority of God, without any intrinsic worth.

Without regard to how this conception radically opposes today's thought and sentiment, and without regard to the harsh criticisms from modern, relevant philosophical and theological sources,³⁹ I hereby state my opinion that Augustine's theory of damnation and the inferiority of human existence, surmountable only by means of the undeserved mercy of God, is a document of the most consistent solution to the antithesis burdening Christian philosophy and theology, which endeavoured to resolve this problem by various means both before and after Augustine. Augustine showed absolutely exceptional intellectual courage, when on the threshold of the culminating period of his ideological development he abandoned the compromises of his previous thought, with which generations of theologians not only before him, but above all since him up to the 21st century have contented themselves, and advocated a solution which unconditionally respects the conception of God as a principle endowed with absolute power and absolute knowledge. In this respect Augustine sacrifices even the phenomenon of the incarnation of Christ and the sacrifice of Christ – nowhere within the context of his statements on the problem of salvation does he mention the manner in which the incarnation of Christ was of benefit to humanity, which remained the same worthless mass, condemned to damnation, after Christ's incarnation as it had been before.⁴⁰ It is perhaps no exaggeration to assert that Christianity, as prepared by Augustine under the pressure of logical necessity from carefully selected passages from the Epistle of Paul, does not stand far from the conception

³⁷ Aug., *De diversis questionibus ad Simplicianum* 1, 2, *passim*, supplemented by important passages in part 1, 1.

³⁸ Flasch (1980: 216).

³⁹ E.g. "Nothing is gained by attempting to defend the doctrine, which remains a terrible one and more likely to arouse our awe than enlist our sympathy". Bonner (1963: 392); similarly Bonner (1993: *passim*). Also compare Flasch (1984: 212–225).

⁴⁰ Although he engages in Christological themes frequently in other theological contents.

which, with regard to the omnipotence of God and the minimal influence of Man on his fate, is held in principle of Islam, but Augustine is still more consistent.

Augustine's courage and intellectual refusal to compromise, or perhaps even presumption, is further fundamentally accentuated by the fact that he formulated his theory in the first months of his position as a bishop in the city of Hippo. Entirely consistently conceived, his theory removes any requirement for the existence of the holy Christian church, for which he reserves only a comforting function, which may benefit the great majority of Christendom, who are condemned to damnation in advance. The small number of those, chosen for salvation do not require this church for any purpose, although of course they cannot know this during their earthly life.

However, in contrast with other radical consequences of his theory of salvation (see below), Augustine never expresses this radical and essential consequence of his theory. On the contrary, he in fact made very successful use of a pragmatic reference to the point that the teaching of his arch adversary Pelagius brings into jeopardy the claim of the church and its hierarchy to the role of the holy guarantor of Christian hope of salvation in his polemic against Pelagius: "Their [the Pelagians' – J. K.] assertions also deny the sense of our blessing, as if we had needlessly declared in favour of the [Christian – J. K.] folk all that we solicit for them from God."⁴¹ In his first battle with Pelagianism Augustine scored a decisive victory,⁴² thus reaching beyond the boundaries of his previous renown in Africa and establishing himself as an authoritative theologian in Rome and thus within the entire later Western church.⁴³ In the heat of the battle however, he several times expressed an idea which proved itself to be ruinous for the stability of Christian thought and later also for the unity of the Christian church, evidently most emphatically thus: "Even for those whom God has predestined to eternal death, God is a just executor of punishment for original sin, and not only due to the sins which the sinners have added themselves, but also for newly born, who have committed no sin."⁴⁴

Pupils of Augustine partially attempted to dilute the disruptive effect of his ideas with formulations which at least in their wording did not induce despair amongst those Christians who were not already certain of their salvation in their earthly life.⁴⁵ This applies above all to Prosper of Aquitan (390?–after 463), but even he was unable to avoid the Augustinian formulation: "From this it ensues that many fall to perdition because they deserve it, many are saved because they have been so blessed by the Saviour."⁴⁶ Others

⁴¹ *Contradicitur etiam istorum contentione benedictionibus nostris, ut incassum super populum dicere uideamur, quicquid eis a domino precamur.* Aug., *Epistola* 175, 5.

⁴² Apparently also by very non-discursive methods (Flash 1980: 78).

⁴³ I am unable to pursue the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius in this text for reasons of space and theme. See e.g. Greshake (2005), also Bonner (1993).

⁴⁴ *Qui [Deus – J. K.] est et illis quos praedestinavit ad aeternam mortem, justissimus supplicii retributor; non solum propter illa quae volentes adjiciunt, verum etiam si infantes nihil adjiciant, propter originale peccatum.* Aug., *De natura et origine animae* 4, 11, 16.

⁴⁵ I am convinced that this was the case of Augustine himself. From a certain perspective his *Confessiones* represent evidence that the mercy of God may save and bring to a prominent position in the church a hopeless sinner who is incapable of doing anything for his moral elevation according to the recommendations and requirement of Pelagius.

⁴⁶ *Ex quibus quod multi pereunt, pereuntium est meritum; quod multi salvantur, salvantis est donum.* Prosper Aquitanus, *Responsiones* 2. There is a question as to whether Augustine used the word "multi" for the number of the saved...

were less cautious. Isidore of Seville (561?-636) clearly states: “There is a twofold predestination, one of the chosen for peace and the second of the damned for [eternal – J. K.] death.”⁴⁷

However, even Augustine himself attempted to dilute his statements on the predestination of human salvation, primarily in response to the objections of a number of monastic communities, which viewed his teaching (entirely correctly) as an absolute denial of the sense of their ascetic self-abnegation.⁴⁸ For the sake of comfort and reassurance he devoted to these communities the text *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, by which he at least verbally attempted to harmonise his antithetical conception of both of these fundamental concepts as contained in the title of the work itself. His method is very characteristic – in the first five chapters he gathers several biblical statements of witnesses on the existence of human free will and the necessity of its correct use in the battle for salvation in the eyes of God. The remaining 41 chapters however repeat without any concessions Augustine’s rigorous theory of predestination for salvation.

Augustine however fully understood the consequences which excessively public proclamation of his theory could have on his ecclesiastical pastoral work, and agreed that “even if it is true what is said about the predestination of God’s gifts, it is nevertheless not necessary to preach about this to the people.”⁴⁹

Thus Augustine enabled the Christian church to take a compromising approach and make concessions from his own unrelenting position, which was sanctioned by the council in Orange (529) by the canon “Not only we do not believe that a man would be predestined for evil by the power of God, but by all malediction we declare to be damned those who would wish to believe such supreme evil.”⁵⁰

Nevertheless, even a century after the death of Aurelius Augustinus there remained a danger that the disputes between Augustinism, Pelagianism and Semipelagianism⁵¹ would once again escalate, resulting in a schism in the Western church. Here, however, history intervened. Between the beginning of the 6th century and the 9th century, the Western national churches, mutually isolated from one another by the establishment of Germanic succession states, were forced to concentrate on the fundamental issues of the survival of their structure and cultural tradition, whilst problems of theology and Christian philosophy altogether receded into the background.⁵² The reading of the original Patristic texts was succeeded instead by the study of florilegia, of which perhaps the most significant is Eugippius’ *Excerpta de operibus Sancti Augustini*. These collections provided a wide selection of texts, but without any differentiation of the chronological sequences of their origin, and so their users stood before the relatively pleasant task of

⁴⁷ *Gemina est praedestinatio siue electorum ad requiem, siue reproborum ad mortem*. Isidorus Hispalensis, *Sententiae* 2, 61.

⁴⁸ See e.g. Machula (2000: 11–12).

⁴⁹ *Etsi verum est quod dicitur de praedestinatione beneficiorum Dei, non est tamen populis praedicandum*. Aug., *De dono perseverantiae* 20, 51.

⁵⁰ *Aliquos uero ad malum diuina potestate praedestinatus esse non solum non credimus, sed etiam, si sunt, qui tantum mali credere uelint, cum omni detestatione illis anathimam dicimus*. *Concilia Galliae* 63, 209. (In older editions this canon is quoted in classicised form corresponding to the correct Latin of the 4th century.)

⁵¹ For these concepts see e.g. Wetzel (2002: 126–128).

⁵² Basic literature see in note 3.

selecting from the mass of passages available to them those which best corresponded to their own convictions. This was made possible by the fact that the loss of cultural continuity with the Patristic era enabled the collections of true works of the Church Fathers to be infiltrated also by apocryphal texts, frequently differing distinctly in their opinions from the teachings of their alleged authors from the era of the Roman Empire.

III. Gottschalk of Orbais in dispute with the hierarchy of the Carolingian church

At the beginning of the 9th century, during the period of the first heyday of the Carolingian Renaissance, its most eminent representative Alcuin, in compiling his main dogmatic treatise *De fide sanctae et individuae Trinitatis*, consulted Augustine's work *De trinitate* as part of his endeavour to make use of the works of Augustine as sources for the creation of an optimistic concept of Carolingian society with a unified administration, a unified church and a unified theology, which does not cast doubt on the capability of human free will to strive independently towards salvation. In this endeavour God's mercy is of course present and essential, but the assistance of this mercy appears to be so obvious and indisputable that it ceases to be a limiting condition. Augustine's pessimistic theory of predestination is completely suppressed in Alcuin's work, and is not reflected whatsoever.⁵³ This concept subsequently became established as a matter of course via Alcuin's authority for all of his pupils, and thus for the clerical elite of the Carolingian Empire in the period around the year 850. This elite included amongst others the Abbot of the Fulda monastery and later Bishop of Mainz Rabanus Maurus (780?–856) and the Archbishop Hincmar of Reims (806?–882).

It is indisputably thanks to the endeavours of Alcuin and his named and unnamed pupils that the cultural environment they had created, by approximately 850, was first capable of reaching beyond this first level of the essentially salvaging intellectual activity of the beginnings of the Carolingian Renaissance. However, the integration of philosophical discourse and the biblical instruction, which the Carolingian scholars of the first generation accomplished rather through their free decision than by their intellectual exertion,⁵⁴ suddenly became a passionately debated question in the Carolingian church within the space of a few years.

This took place due to the merit of a single man – Gottschalk of Orbais, who was mentioned and presented at the beginning of this text.⁵⁵ The originals of his works have been known only since 1931 and were not published in print until 1945. Until that time his opinions were preserved only in the quotes of his opponents. Following this edition Gottschalk once again became the subject of numerous studies, which are no longer under the unequivocal influence of the predominant dogmatic disputes, even if the views of the scholars naturally differ slightly in their tone and impression according to their religious orientation.

⁵³ Flash (1991a: 9–11).

⁵⁴ In which to a certain extent they showed themselves to be worthy heirs of Augustine's epistemological voluntarism, used however on the work of Augustine himself.

⁵⁵ For the life of Gottschalk see the literature referred to in note 6.

The result of this investigation is that Gottschalk, in his concept of twofold predestination, faithfully preserves Augustine's conception. No scholar since 1945 has referred to a nuance of Gottschalk's opinions by which he would have distorted the theories of Augustine. Gottschalk, however, expresses the radical consequences of these theories more frequently and more heartlessly than Augustine, and the formulation of *gemina praedestinatio*, which was admittedly used for the first time by Isidore of Seville,⁵⁶ for Gottschalk becomes an abbreviation of Augustine's entire theory of salvation, which is granted by means of God's fathomless mercy only to the chosen. His style of argument also differs from that of Augustine.⁵⁷ Although he shares with him the habit of substantiating his theories with a long range of biblical and other quotations, which he draws upon from his exceptional knowledge of Patristic literature, Augustine's deep psychological argumentation is alien to him. Instead of this Gottschalk makes abundant use of grammatical considerations, which ensue from the conviction that Latin, as the language of the Bible (in Western Europe of that time) and theology is capable, through its grammatical qualities, of reflecting the relationships and reality of the intelligible world in which God's presence is manifested.⁵⁸ He subjects even his fundamental conceptual collocation of *gemina praedestinatio* to grammatical analysis, which is intended to prove its theological soundness: "Similarly predestination is called twofold, thus divided, on the one hand for the chosen and on the other for the damned, because it is single, even if divided ... similarly as in the case of authors of profane literature ... of whom one calls a tree twofold, by which he wish to say that this concerned not two trees but one."⁵⁹

Gottschalk was viewed as harsh in the eyes of his contemporaries also in another respect, namely the presumptuousness with which, for the first time in the Middle Ages, he was willing to correct the Patristic authorities; of Jerome of Stridon he states: "There are many other places – who could count them – where Saint Jerome speaks like a [mere – J. K.] man."⁶⁰ He makes similar statements with regard to Gregory the Great and the Greek Patristic authors – though never about Augustine.⁶¹

Gottschalk, however, was evidently not active as a theologian in a literary sense until 848.⁶² Prior to this time he had acquired exceptional knowledge of the Patristic literature, and in the work of Aurelius Augustinus he felt an affinity with the works of his later period, which expressed an uncompromising theory of predestination for salvation, as outlined above in this article. It is doubtful as to whether he was capable of differentiating these works as chronologically later and therefore ideologically more sophisticated

⁵⁶ See in note 47.

⁵⁷ Jolivet (1958: 16–31; 161–184).

⁵⁸ Jolivet (1977: *passim*).

⁵⁹ *Tale est autem, quod dicitur praedestinatio in electos videlicet et reprobos bipartita, cum sit una, licet sit dupla ... et apud auctores quoque saecularis litteraturae ... eorum quidam geminam dicit arborem non duas volens intelligi sed unam.* God. 67, 10–27.

⁶⁰ *Sane sunt et multa alia – quae quis enumeraret cuncta – ubi sanctus idem Hieronymus ut homo locutus est.* God. 235, 12–13.

⁶¹ In a number of places in his work, Gillis (2009) believes that he sees in Gottschalk's conduct an attempt to assert himself within the structures of the church and attain a prestigious formal position therein. I believe that he oversimplifies Gottschalk's motivations and oversimplifies the complexity of his personality, too.

⁶² This article, however, is not devoted to his poetry, which he undoubtedly began writing when still in his youth during his studies at the monastery in Fulda. On this poetical work see Weber (1992).

than Augustine's early works, which with regard to this issue defended the compromising position of the late antique state church, corresponding to the requirements of the Carolingian theology. It is rather possible to assume that Gottschalk's orientation towards Augustine's mature and later work, which brought him to his conviction regarding the incontrovertibility of twofold predestination, both to salvation and to damnation, was motivated merely by his stark character and the relentless nature of his logical thinking, which refused to accommodate the antagonisms and inconsistencies in the theological considerations of his contemporaries, even if this immoderate intransigence brought him into a position of isolation and exposed him to persecution.

Whilst Gottschalk resided in northern Italy and on the Balkan peninsula during the years 838? to 848, he was able to enjoy the benefits of his reputation as a learned scholar and a charismatic debater and preacher, without being exposed to confrontation with his opponents or being forced to formulate his ideas in writing. This changed in 848, when he was called upon to appear at a subjection of his views to scrutiny at the synod in Mainz. He then, evidently for the first time, prepared a selection of Patristic texts, primarily of course by Augustine, on which he rested his conviction. The existence of such a chrestomathy is testified to by Hincmar, who entitles it a "pamphlet of his delusion" – "*libellus sui erroris*".⁶³ As a result in modern literature this is quoted under the title *Libellus*, however all that is preserved of this are the quotes in Hincmar's polemical treatise *De praedestinatione*. The collection of Patristic quotes, however, in this un preserved text is exposed to by a critique of Rabanus Maurus for the fact that in his polemic against Gottschalk he unwittingly also makes use of heretical Pelagianist authors.⁶⁴ It is entirely understandable that, on the basis of such opinions, his conviction by the synod of Mainz was practically inevitable.

However, according to Hincmar's testimony, *Libellus* also contains Gottschalk's confession expressing the core of his views on predestination, and demonstrates how Gottschalk had developed a fondness for the genre of literary confession. Evidently the earliest of his preserved works are two texts by the titles of *Confessio brevior*⁶⁵ and *Confessio proluxior*.⁶⁶ The first of these evidently originated from the period immediately following the synod in Quierzy in 849, when Gottschalk was compelled by physical violence to burn his previous text, which was evidently *Libellus* or an amended variant thereof. *Confessio brevior* was thus an expression of his inflexibility, written at the beginning of his life imprisonment. This short text is above all a compact florilegium of quotes from the Bible, Aurelius Augustinus, Gregory the Great and Isidore of Seville, which in the opinion of Gottschalk incontestably demonstrate the rectitude of his opinion and the spiritual sterility of his opponents in connection with their abuse of ecclesiastical functions.

Probably somewhat later *Confessio proluxior* is basically an extended version of the previous work, and the quotes which Gottschalk presents in support of his position are far more numerous and also quoted within a wider context, with brief inserted commentaries. However, methodically this work still represents a typical early medieval *catena* of Patristic quotes, as known from the Carolingian and Byzantine literature.

⁶³ PL 125, 84.

⁶⁴ PL 125, 182.

⁶⁵ God. 52–54.

⁶⁶ God. 55–76.

This, however, relates only to the middle part of this work. Its introduction attempts stylistically to approximate Augustine's *Confessiones*⁶⁷, whilst its conclusion is a long prayer to God with a plea for protection and vindication. This conclusion indisputably demonstrates that Gottschalk feels himself to be an unimpeachable prophet, even if of an uncomfortable theological truth, and in his seclusion he almost mystically hopes to be recognised as the bearer of this truth, to the benefit of the entire contemporary church.⁶⁸ For this purpose he is willing to subject himself to trial by ordeal at the subsequent ecclesiastical synod.⁶⁹ Here he clearly demonstrates his faith in the effectiveness of the procedure of trial by ordeal, in which resilience towards physical suffering is taken as evidence of innocence, as was the case in proceedings before the early medieval lay courts; such a procedure is not however substantiated in any phase of the development of the canon law, and appeal thereto testifies to the fact that Gottschalk was beginning to lose contact with the reality of the Carolingian church, which in the overwhelming majority had dismissed him in his lifelong confinement as a convicted heretic.

Confessio prolixior is evidently the most concentrated and accomplished of Gottschalk's works. At a time of his growing isolation and despair during an unspecified period after 850, he linked back to this work in his last text, devoted to the question of predestination, entitled *De praedestinatione*.⁷⁰ Despite its extensiveness, it brings little that is new or relevant, even methodically – the number of quotes documenting the legitimacy of Gottschalk's opinions is again increased and the entire work is conceived as a sermon to a young pupil, who is a devotee of Gottschalk.⁷¹ It also contains several long digressions on other theological themes (primarily on the Christological dispute of the antique church) and overall appears as a last echo of Gottschalk's ideological endeavour, devoted to the question of the predestination of human salvation.

From the beginning, the representatives of the church were capable of challenging only the moral consequences, which Gottschalk's teaching could bring about by jeopardizing the pastoral endeavours of the holy church.⁷² Rabanus Maurus, who had been Gottschalk's personal enemy since 829,⁷³ wrote to the Margrave of Friuli in ca. 845: "It is known that in your midst there dwells some kind of sage by the name of Gottschalk, who proclaims that divine preordination restricts Man to such a degree ... that he strives in vain unless he is predestined for [eternal – J. K.] life. ... And this sect has

⁶⁷ Gillis (2009: 246–249).

⁶⁸ However, Gillis's assertions that Gottschalk feels himself to be equal to Augustine in his pedagogical authority are clearly exaggerated (Gillis 2009: 213–214; 248).

⁶⁹ God. 74–75. Gillis again exaggeratedly claims that Gottschalk here feels himself to be able to substantiate his assertions by performing a miracle (Gillis 2009: 257–258); it is characteristic that Gillis does not provide any literal quotations either for this or for his previous assertions.

⁷⁰ God. 180–258. Gottschalk's works from this period relating to other theological questions (the conception of the Holy Trinity, the question of the theological understanding of certain liturgical texts of the Carolingian church) do not relate to the theme of this article. See Gillis (2009: 279–362).

⁷¹ Which was not necessarily a mere illusion if we consider that Gottschalk in his confinement evidently had undisturbed access to the monastery library and the opportunity to write long tractates.

⁷² In this they find understanding also of some conservatively oriented modern scholars, e.g. Schrimpf (1986: 157–159).

⁷³ See in note 6.

already led many to despair of themselves, asking – why should I strive for salvation and eternal life?”⁷⁴

It was not until after the conviction of Gottschalk at the synods in Mainz in 848 and in Quierzy in 849 that his second most eminent opponent, Hincmar of Reims, attempted to refute his opinions also theoretically in the treatise entitled *De praedestinatione*, which to his surprise encountered uncompromising criticism from Gottschalk’s devotees and critical scholars of the West Frankish Empire. He also appealed to the then already renowned scholar Johannes Scottus Eriugena (810–877) to refute Gottschalk’s (or Augustine’s) theory of salvation.

Eriugena however did not allow himself to be enticed into conducting a conventional polemic with Gottschalk, in search of a middle way between the requirements of defending the role of the actual church structures in the mechanism of human salvation and the categorical statements on the irrevocable predestination of human salvation in the later works of Augustine, as had been expected of him.⁷⁵ Instead he became the first Christian thinker for five centuries to set out on the path of the Neo-Platonic speculations of early Augustine, denying the existence of evil, which he explained precisely within the intentions of the first works of Augustine as the mere abundance of good. He rejected any anthropomorphism of God, and from His absolute simplicity inferred the impossibility of Gottschalk’s twofold predestination and in fact also the impossibility even of a single predestination, because this also presupposes an anthropomorphic conception of time, which is alien to God as a unique entity. The possibility and necessity of damning sinful souls is hereby removed, and the existence of hell as a place of residence of the damned, for whom no room can be found in the Ptolemaic model of the world, is denied. The torment of the sinful begins at the moment when they commit their sins, and does not await any formal damning by Divine authority.⁷⁶

In consequence, in Carolingian era, Augustine’s work inspired and enabled both extreme solutions to the relationship between God’s omnipotence and the possibility of human free will – in the sense of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans on the basis of Augustine’s later thought, and also in the sense of the (very probably apocryphal) First Epistle of Paul to Timothy in loose connection with Augustine’s early work. During the decade 840–850, both versions were updated for the first time after half a millennium of European history. The leading figures of the advanced intellectual environment of the then Frankish church were capable of fighting out a decisive battle over these two concepts, which was drawn towards in the years 849⁷⁷–859⁷⁸.

⁷⁴ *Constat quemdam sciolum, nomine Gotescalcum, apud vos manere, qui dogmatizat quod praedestinatio Dei omnem hominem ita constringat, ut ... frustra et incassum laboret, si non est praedestinatus ad vitam. Et jam hinc multos in desperationem suimet haec secta perduxit, ita ut dicant: Quid mihi necesse est pro salute mea et vita aeterna laborare?* PL 112, 1554B–C.

⁷⁵ The most detailed analysis of Eriugena’s polemic with Gottschalk is provided by Karfiková (2003: 147–175).

⁷⁶ Flasch (2011: 176–180). Whereas Gottschalk was repeatedly whipped and imprisoned for life for his fidelity to the true Augustine, after expressing these entirely heretical ideas Eriugena continued to enjoy many years of undisturbed work on his main treatises. It was not until 1210 that the possession of his texts became punishable by death.

⁷⁷ Gottschalk’s conviction at the synod in Quierzy.

⁷⁸ The synod of Tusey, at which, in the transformed political and ecclesiastical-political environment, the dispute of Hincmar with the Southern French bishops and theologians, and thus also interest in the person and work of Gottschalk, ended.

The stability of the church and of Christian thought, built upon the foundation of a syncretism of both of these conceptions as required by the consideration of the catechism and pastoral activity of the Christian community, was rescued by the breakdown of the exclusively Carolingian cultural *milieu*. The death of Charles the Bald in 877, the collapse of the Carolingian Empire in 887, as well as the commencement of the Norman, Hungarian and Arab invasions into the central regions of the Carolingian Ecumene in the very same decade, all that returned Western theology, if to a lesser extent, to the situation of the period of the migration of the nations some four hundred years ago. Speculation concerning the aporia of faith once again became a luxury, Patristic thought as an undifferentiated whole of a tradition became a single theoretical foundation. When, after another two hundred and fifty years, the problem returned in the work of Anselm of Canterbury, European theological discourse now had at its disposal the basic instruments of Aristotelian syllogism, which had been used only sporadically during the Carolingian era. Through these means, and later through the full reception of Aristotelianism, the problem of the dispute between the two Augustinian models of the relationship of an omnipotent God and human free will was neutralised for a further five hundred years – until the explosion of the European Reformation in the 16th century.⁷⁹

ABBREVIATIONS USED

Aug.: Aurelius Augustinus
CC CM: *Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio mediaevalis*.
CC SL: *Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina*.
CSEL: *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*
God.: Godescalcus Orbacensis
PG: *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Graeca*
PL: *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*
SC: *Sources chrétiennes*

SOURCES

The New Testament is quoted in the Greek wording according to the UBS publication, 4th ed., 1989, in the English translation according to the Authorised King James version. Abbreviations of the biblical books are used according to the usage of the King James translation.

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⁷⁹ Leaving aside the personalities of its predecessors John Wyclif and Jan Hus in the 14th and 15th centuries.

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DISPUTE OVER THE PREORDINATION OF HUMAN SALVATION, ITS FOUNDATIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE DURING THE CAROLINGIAN RENAISSANCE

Summary

The text deals with the methods by which Christian thought, from its beginnings until the 9th century, attempted to resolve the relationship of two disparate constants of the Christian faith – the conception of an omnipotent God and the freedom of human will that renders Man responsible for the salvation of his soul through divine justice. Two fundamental constructions are recalled, which ensure the resolution of this antithesis and are best characterised by two phases in the thought of Aurelius Augustinus, which was optimistically inclined in the period of his youth and subsequently deeply pessimistic in his culminating work. The text refers to attempts to find a compromise between both concepts, which Christian thinkers strived for from the 3rd century onwards and which are continuing to this day, and to the motives for these attempts. The escalation of this dispute within the environment of the Carolingian Renaissance in the middle of the 9th century due to the thinking of Godescalcus of Orbais returned Christian discourse to the level of the Patristics of late antiquity, and had the potential to jeopardize the stability of Christian theology of the time. Through the influence of a cultural-historical development of late Carolingian culture, however, the dispute was subdued, and the scholasticism of the High and Late Middle Ages succeeded in maintaining intellectual control over this fundamental problem of the Christian faith until the time of the European Reformation.

DISKUSE O PŘEDURČENOSTI LIDSKÉ SPÁSY, JEJÍ VÝCHODISKA A VÝZNAM BĚHEM KAROLÍNSKÉ RENESANCE

Shrnutí

Text se zabývá způsobem, jakým se křesťanské myšlení od svého počátku do 9. století snažilo vyřešit vztah dvou disparátních konstant křesťanské víry – koncepce všemohoucího Boha a svobody lidské vůle, která činí člověka odpovědným za spásu jeho duše spravedlností Boží. Jsou připomenuty dvě základní konstrukce, které zajišťují řešení tohoto rozporu a jsou nejlépe charakterizovány dvěma etapami myšlení Aurelia Augustina, optimisticky laděnou v období jeho mládí a hluboce pesimistickou v jeho vrcholném díle. Je poukázáno na pokusy o kompromis mezi oběma koncepty, o které se snažili křesťanští myslitelé již od 3. století a které trvají dodnes, a na jejich motivy. Vyhrčení tohoto sporu v polovině 9. století v prostředí karolínské renesance spojené se jménem Godescalca z Orbais vrátilo křesťanský diskurs na úroveň pozdně antické patristiky a mělo potenciál ohrozit stabilitu tehdejší křesťanské teologie. Vlivem kulturně historického vývoje pozdní karolínské kultury byla však polemika utlumená a scholastika vrcholného a pozdního středověku pak až do období evropské reformace dokázala udržet nad tímto základním problémem křesťanské víry intelektuální kontrolu.