Predestination Yesterday and Today

Syllabus

Predestination is often thought of as a peculiarity of the Reformation, even as an invention of Calvin's. The aim of the Course is to show that in fact belief in predestination is the default position, part of the main spine of the Christian Church's confession, from the apostles onwards. It is therefore not an optional belief for the Christian, and certainly not merely one 'perspective' or 'model' of God having parity with other 'perspectives' or 'models' which deny predestination.

After briefly considering the biblical evidence, particularly that of Romans 8 and 9, and Ephesians 1, we shall examine aspects of the thought of Augustine (with a sidelong glance at the Council of Orange), of Anselm and of Aquinas. (The ‘A’; team) We shall see that far from inventing the doctrine, or being obsessional about it, Calvin very largely inherited their theology. In our work we shall pay particular attention to conceptual clarity and to the attitude of the Christian mind when it meets divine mysteries. The course will conclude by examining various deviant understandings of Predestination, and by reflecting on the relation between theology and philosophy that our survey of the data has uncovered.

The Course will be examined by the presentation of a Term Paper. Details of this will be supplied once the course meets.

Required Reading

Because the entire course lasts only 5 days it is vital to read beforehand. You are strongly advised to read at least the material down to and including the Aquinas material before the class starts.


Augustine, To Simplician – On Various Questions, trans., John H. S Burleigh in Augustine: Earlier Writings (Library of Christian Classics, London, SCM Press, 1953) (Augustine deals with Romans 7 and Romans 9. We need the section on Romans 9, but the entire thing is not very long, and quite interesting)


Aquinas, *Providence and Predestination*, (Articles 5 and 6 of his *De Veritate*) trans. Robert W. Mulligan (Chicago, Gateway, Regnery, nd) *(Article 6)*

Or

*Summa Theologiae* Prima Parts, Questions 22 and 23 (Blackfriars edn repr. Image Books, New Yor, 1969)


The Westminster Confessions of Faith, Chs. III and V

Bruce Ware, *God’s Greater Glory*, Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2004 *(Chapters 4 and 5)*


Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/2 Section 32 ‘The Problem of the Correct Doctrine of the Election of Grace’ *(The entire section)*