

Giving the Arminian Babel a Shake

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An Historical and Doctrinal Review of the Wesley-Toplady Controversy (3)

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears (II Tim. 4:3).

PART 3: Atheism in a Mask.

Augustus M. Toplady was far too modest. He claimed only to give Wesley's Arminian Babel a shake, when, in fact, he demolished the whole edifice. His method was straightforward. Wesley's vast kingdom rested upon the gospel of the well-meant offer, the proclamation that God wills to save all men through Jesus Christ. Toplady exposed that foundation as a false gospel, thus undermining and effectively toppling the entire theological structure built upon it.

His method was effective. He demonstrated by good and necessary consequence that the gospel of the well-meant offer and the gospel of Jesus Christ found in Scripture presented two different messages of salvation, proceeded from two different Fathers, were grounded in two different crosses, and worked by two different Spirits. The implication was clear: Wesley's gospel presented an idol formed largely in his own imagination, so that in the final analysis his theology was really nothing more than "atheism in a mask."¹

Toplady's arguments were thorough and biblical. Yet, Wesley never bothered to answer the objections raised by this honourable man. He ignored him and refused to confront the logical inferences of his own bally-hooed gospel. Oblivious of his own contradictions and seemingly uninterested in vast portions of Scripture, Wesley simply quoted his favourite texts, Ezekiel 33:11, I Timothy 2:4-6, and II Peter 3:9, as if this were the end of the matter. It seems that little has changed. Whatever their reason, modern advocates of the well-meant offer likewise seem uninterested in either listening to or defending the shameful implications of their gospel.

¹Augustus M. Toplady, "A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrine," *The Complete Works* (Harrisonburg: Sprinkle Publications, 1987), p. 312; hereafter, *Works*.

When Toplady unmasked the god of Wesley's well-meant offer, a shockingly human creature was discovered behind the facade. He exposed this pseudo-god with a surprisingly simple argument. Wesley claimed that the god of the well-meant offer wills to save every human being, in time reveals that will through the preaching, and gives his grace to everyone who hears this gospel so they are empowered to accept the offered salvation. Yet, as even Wesley acknowledged, not all men will actually be saved. Toplady argued, therefore, that the god of the well-meant offer was entirely powerless to save everyone whom he willed to save and was frustrated when many spurned the grace he gave them.

Our free-willers and our chance-mongers [Toplady's epithet for preachers of the well-meant offer] tell us that God does not do whatsoever he pleases; that there are a great number of things which God wishes to do, and tugs and strives to do, and yet cannot bring to pass: they tell us, as one ingeniously expresses it: 'That all mankind he fain would save, but longs for what he cannot have. Industrious thus to sound abroad a disappointed changing God.'²

Although the god presented in the well-meant offer possessed a rational will, he was simply no different than the heathen idols. Like them, this god was completely unable to save. He was, Toplady charged, a god entirely unworthy of worship.

[T]rust, confidence, reliance, and dependence for salvation are all acts ... of divine worship: and upon whatsoever you depend, whether in whole or in part, for your acceptance with God, and for your justification in his sight, whatsoever you rely upon, and trust in, for the attainment of grace or glory; if it be anything short of God in Christ, you are an idolater to all intents and purposes.³

Toplady also asserted that the well-meant offer stripped each of the Triune persons of their proper deity and transformed them into the original dysfunctional family. Besides the obvious fact that the will of the Father to save everyone could easily be thwarted by the stubborn wills of men, the Son's work of atone-

²"Free-will and Merit Fairly Examined," *Works*, p. 353.

³"Free-will and Merit Fairly Examined," *Works*, p. 352.

ment was also a colossal flop. Wesley recognized that if God the Father wills the salvation of all human beings, God the Son must die for them. But if so, Toplady argued, the Son must be blamed for failing to secure their salvation.

If [Wesley's] hypothesis be true, millions of those for whom Christ died will be condemned; and what heightens the absurdity, condemned on account of those very sins for which Christ did die ... The Father would purchase to himself a church of elect persons for his own peculiar residence and then leave Satan to run away with as many of the beams and pillars as he pleases.⁴

The clear implication of the well-meant offer was that Christ's death really accomplished nothing. His death could not have been substitutionary. It could not have been redemption. The awful suffering and deep shame endured by the Son only made salvation *possible*. Toplady charged, therefore, that in the well-meant offer Jesus' work on the cross did not actually pay for sins with His precious blood. It came down to writing a mound of blank cheques that were distributed indiscriminately but remained worthless ink on paper unless an individual happened to cash it.

The adorable Mediator, instead of having actually obtained eternal redemption for his people and secured the blessings of grace and glory to those for whom he died, is represented as bequeathing to them only a few spiritual lottery-tickets, which may come up blanks or prizes, just as the wheel of chance and human caprice happens to turn ... The Messiah's obedience and sufferings stand ... for mere ciphers until our own free-will is so kind as to prefix the initial figure and render them of value ... I tremble at the shocking consequences of a system which ... sinks the Son of God ... into a spiritual huckster, who, having purchased certain blessings of his Father, sells them out afterwards to men upon terms and conditions!⁵

Toplady also reasoned that in the well-meant offer, the Holy Spirit was as impotent as the Father and the Son. First, the Spirit never bothered to distribute

⁴"A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrine," *Works*, p. 316.

⁵"A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrine," *Works*, p. 315.

the offered salvation to everyone whom the Father wanted to save, for untold millions in history were deprived of even hearing the gospel. Second, He was powerless to effect the salvation of everyone who heard the well-meant offer, for in the well-meant offer the grace necessary to work faith was as common as the mound of cheques Christ wrote—and therefore as worthless, too. Toplady argued that if everyone received that grace, but did not actually accept the offered salvation, then the Spirit of grace was to blame for this lack of success.

According to this tenet [of common grace] God in endeavouring (for it seems it is only an endeavour) to convert sinners, may by sinners be foiled, defeated, and disappointed ... In a word, the Holy Spirit, after having for years, perhaps, danced attendance on the will of man, may at last, like a discomfited general, or an unsuccessful petitioner, be either put to ignominious flight, or contemptuously dismissed, *re infecta*, without accomplishing the end for which he was sent.⁶

So much for the Triune God presented in the well-meant offer: God the Father willed the salvation of all men, but was helpless to overcome their wills; His Son did not stand in their place or redeem them; and the Spirit did not spread the good news to all or impart a grace powerful enough to work faith in them. In Toplady's opinion, this deity with his well-meant intentions was more abominable than that presented by Arius.

Arianism robs two of the divine persons. Arminianism robs all the three: [it] robs the Father of his sovereignty, decrees and providence: the Son of his efficacy as a Saviour: and the Spirit of his efficacy as a Sanctifier. An Arian represents the Son and Spirit as dependent on God the Father. An Arminian represents God the Father as dependent on the wills of men for the accomplishment of his desires, God the Son as dependent on the wills of men for the success of his mediation, and God the Spirit as dependent on the wills of men for the success of his agency.⁷

⁶"A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrine," *Works*, p. 318.

⁷"More Work for Mr. John Wesley," *Works*, p. 757.

Toplady charged that the well-meant offer was exposed as a false gospel by its inherent notion of conditional faith. According to the well-meant offer, faith was a necessary condition to salvation. Wesley, of course, tried valiantly to strip this condition of any merit by calling it grace. But Toplady called this “a thin evasion: a mere barrel thrown out for the amusement of the whale to make him ... lose sight of the ship.”⁸ Because Wesley severed both the distribution and effectiveness of it from an absolute decretal will of God, faith had to be a real meritorious condition regardless of how gracious he claimed it was. Faith was not distributed efficaciously by the Spirit according to the Father’s will to save and the Son’s redeeming work (otherwise, everyone would believe with saving faith). Faith was an action that man had to perform, upon which his salvation depended, and that was not produced efficaciously by God as a necessary part of the promised grace of salvation itself.

Toplady believed that this notion of conditional faith further demonstrated that the god presented in the well-meant offer was fashioned in the likeness of men. He claimed conditions were exclusively human constructs made necessary by men’s very changeable and limited nature. “All the promises of man to man ought to be conditional. It is only for God to make absolute promises, for he alone is unchangeable and omnipotent.”⁹ The notion of conditional faith implied God was mutable and limited, and the effectiveness of grace entirely random. In Toplady’s mind, the god of the well-meant offer was little different than a careless ostrich who deposits her eggs in the sand to be hatched or crushed but powerless to determine either outcome. The blessings of grace, he concluded, “were too valuable to be shuffled and dealt out by the hand of chance.”¹⁰

Another implication of conditional faith was that it destroyed the saving character of gospel preaching. Toplady’s reasoning was simple: grace and conditionality were incompatible opposites. “The one totally destroys the other,” he said. “And they can no more subsist together than two particles of matter can occupy the same individual portion of space at the same point of time.”¹¹ They could not exist together in the mind of God, let alone on the same pulpit or in the mind of any hearers of the gospel. Where faith was preached as a condition of salvation, grace was annihilated as a saving power in that gospel and relegated to some vague notion of unmerited good.

⁸“More Work for Mr. John Wesley,” *Works*, p. 741.

⁹“Observations and Reflections,” *Works*, p. 553.

¹⁰“A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrine,” *Works*, p. 313.

¹¹“Free-will and Merit Fairly Examined,” *Works*, p. 356.

Toplady maintained that no gospel of conditional faith could be the power of God unto salvation. First, a gospel of conditional faith relegated grace to a cheap commodity that depended upon mercantile tactics for its distribution and effectiveness. This was the inevitable result because, as Toplady expressed it, “conditions in things spiritual were analogous to a price in matters of commerce.”¹² Since faith was a condition, neither preacher nor hearer could rely upon God for an irresistible, powerful grace to seize dead sinners and infuse a living faith into them. Preachers, then, became little more than spiritual hucksters who relied upon a high-pressure sales pitch to sell their worthless grace—not much different, Toplady said, than auctioneers, “who, with the hammer in their hands, are always bawling out, ‘Now is your time; now is your time: a-going, a-going, a-going.’”¹³

Second, Toplady claimed that a gospel of conditional faith was equally powerless to sanctify sinners unto final salvation. He argued that if faith was conditional, then every blessing of salvation received through faith was also conditional. Justification, repentance, good works, and final salvation were all as doubtful, powerless, and meritorious as the faith through which they were received. And again, neither preacher nor hearer of this gospel could be certain about their reception or continuance. Therefore, Toplady asserted, such preaching necessarily became moralistic and its hearers self-righteous. And it was especially the latter that concerned him the most, because individual spiritual lives were at stake. He warned

That grand error of the hearts . . . which misrepresents justification as at all suspended on causes or conditions of human performance; will and must, if finally persisted in, transmit the unbeliever, who has opportunities of better information, to that place of torment where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.¹⁴

Although Toplady sharply condemned both the well-meant offer and its preachers, it would be a mistake to think that he had little to say positively. While refuting the cavils of Wesley, Toplady eloquently articulated the Reformed faith, especially the call of the gospel. Significantly, he did this in connection

¹²“A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrine,” *Works*, p. 313.

¹³“Observations and Reflections,” *Works*, p. 541.

¹⁴“A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrine,” *Works*, p. 310.

with its position on predestination. Although he subscribed formally to the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, Toplady consciously worked out his refutation of the well-meant offer according to the significant creedal statement of the *Canons of Dordt*. Because the well-meant offer is today a powerful force in Reformed churches, and because proponents of the well-meant offer insist that opposition to their gospel is a relatively new, un-Reformed phenomena, we conclude by briefly outlining the solidly Reformed position on the call of the gospel as formulated by this stalwart theologian.

In keeping with the long line of Reformed theologians, Toplady was covenantal in his approach to the call of the gospel. He considered it impossible to understand the nature of the gospel call apart from God's sovereign decree of election and the covenant. He believed election was God's eternal choosing of some out of the human race to live in covenant union as members of Christ's body. The covenant he understood to be a bond of love that the Triune God established in eternity with Jesus Christ and with all the elect in Christ. This covenant consisted of nothing less than the whole of salvation itself, which was gracious and everlasting, due to the nature of God who establishes and maintains it unilaterally in time. As Toplady expressed it: "Our own unbelief may occasionally tear the copies of the covenant given us by Christ, but unbelief cannot come at the covenant itself. Christ keeps the original deed in Heaven with himself, where it can never be lost."¹⁵

The gospel call Toplady believed to be God's efficacious drawing of his elect people into that conscious living covenant fellowship with Christ. Therefore, preaching of the gospel was the means by which, as Toplady put it so beautifully, God takes the elect who were "betrothed to Christ from everlasting in the covenant ... and actually marries [them] to him ... in conversion."¹⁶

The call of the gospel had several important elements that were implied by this saving covenantal purpose of God. First, Toplady carefully distinguished between an internal aspect of the gospel call, which was issued and made effective by the Holy Spirit, and an external aspect, which was the gospel message spoken by an ordained office bearer. That external call of preaching must set forth the person and work of Jesus Christ as God's provision for the salvation of depraved and guilty sinners. It must make known faith in Jesus as the only way of salvation for sinners. It must summons the audience with urgency and pas-

¹⁵"A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrine," *Works*, p. 323.

¹⁶"Observations and Reflections," *Works*, p. 545.

sion to believe in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. And it must promise full pardon and eternal life to all who obey the summons and come to Jesus Christ with a true faith, while also warning sharply that eternal damnation awaits all who refuse to repent.

Toplady strongly asserted that this external call of the gospel must be preached promiscuously, i.e. universally to all men without regard to their person or spiritual state. According to him, the preacher must be unconcerned with whether hearers were elect or reprobate—after all, the preacher had no access to such information. “The ministerial calls and exhortations of God’s ambassadors,” he said, are to be “urged and addressed as well to the awakened as the un-awakened . . . A Christian minister, preaches to all that come within the sphere of his address.”¹⁷ And to demonstrate that Toplady put this belief into practice, we have a sample of one such promiscuous summons he issued as a servant of the Lord:

Any of you, who are either in an unconverted state, or who are in a backsliding state, to one and the other I say this evening, seek ye the Lord while he may be found . . . O, that God may draw you by his power! For in vain does a preacher strike the ear, unless God’s own finger opens the heart . . . O! that the power of God may go with the ministration of his word, and that some wicked man, this night, may be willing to forsake his way; that some unrighteous soul may be enabled to turn to Christ; so will he experience the certainty and freeness of that promise that God will abundantly pardon all those that come to him, in the name, and trusting in the blood and righteousness of his adorable Son.¹⁸

Although this external call of grace was to be issued to all men generally, Toplady insisted the internal call itself was particular. First, it was particular in its summons. The gospel did not address everyone in the world—elect as well as reprobate. Rather, the gospel addressed only the elect. It did not, however, address them using the term “elect” (as Wesley had charged). Because the audience had no direct access to the eternal decrees of God, the gospel addressed them in terms of their experience, for example, the hungry, the weary, the thirsty, the

¹⁷“Sermon: Good News From Heaven,” *Works*, p. 363.

¹⁸“Sermon on Isaiah 55:12,” in George Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady* (Durham: Go Publications, 2000), p. 399.

labouring, or the heavy laden. This was not a universal call as Wesley supposed. It did not even address everyone in the audience, Toplady argued, for someone could be as dry as a bone and never want the water of life. "Take notice," he said (expounding Isaiah 55:1), "it is addressed only to those that thirst, i.e. to those who so far know the joyful sound as to wish for an experimental participation of the blessings it proclaims."¹⁹ Through the internal operation of the Spirit, the elect and they alone know themselves to be hungry or thirsty for righteousness. And by experiencing this, they were also comforted and assured of their election.

Secondly, the gospel call was particular as to its effect. Toplady maintained that the gospel call was particular as to its effect primarily because God's purpose with the call was particular. It was intended to gather only those whom He had elected and for whom Jesus Christ has laid down His life. In them alone, God the Holy Spirit worked believing faith so that they would respond to the gospel call and come to living covenant communion with Christ. All others who heard this gospel were repulsed, and on them God would manifest His justice.

The purposes of divine grace are fully answered in the salvation of God's chosen and the purposes of divine vengeance are fully answered in the perdition of the impenitent. With regard to God's people, one great end of their being brought to and acquainted in time with the truths of the gospel is that after they have filled up their appointed place ... they may in the hour of death have the celestial gates thrown open.... Divine sovereignty is the keeper of the door of heaven; free grace is the lock; and Christ's righteousness is the key that opens it to all who are entitled to everlasting life by virtue of what Jesus has done and suffered, by a covenant grant from God the Father, settled in his counsels of old, and witnessed to the conscience, when the soul is converted to God. All who are thus entitled, through grace, shall enter by the gates ...²⁰

According to Toplady, the particular nature of the gospel call's effect in no way hindered the minister from preaching the gospel indiscriminately to all men. Nor should the minister imagine that because the gospel call is particular as to its address and effect, that God intended to give faith to everyone within hearing of the gospel message. Not so, Toplady argued,

¹⁹"Sermon: Good News From Heaven," *Works*, p. 366.

²⁰"Sermon on Isaiah 55:12," *Augustus Montague Toplady*, p. 401.

A fisher who stands upon the shore, and plunges his net into the sea at large, is not so frantic as to think of catching all the fishes in the sea, though he offers the net indefinitely and without exception. So when a Christian minister spreads the gospel net, he preaches to all that come within the sphere of his address; not with an expectation of catching all, but of catching as many as God shall please; knowing that it is the Holy Spirit alone who can drive souls into the net, and effectually catch them for Jesus Christ.

The duty of the preacher was simply to issue the external call to all men and then rely upon God to work faith within them according to his sovereign good pleasure. Nor should the knowledge of God's good pleasure hinder the minister from urging all his hearers to repent and believe. God could reach them through the preaching and work that which was necessary. Through the preacher, God was serious about what He said. He promised eternal life to them that believed and threatened destruction to them that refused. But He never promises to save every wicked person.

When God says, 'Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thought,' the meaning is plainly this, consistent with the analogy of faith, that whatsoever will, wherever God has wrought a desire in the heart of a person, in whomsoever that desire is wrought, though ever so antecedently vile ... from the instant that he is enabled to turn to God in Christ, from that instant he may conclude that he has a safe indubitable warrant, for laying claim, through grace, to all the blessings of the gospel as his own ...²¹

Toplady also asserted that the gospel was particular in its effect due to the very nature of grace—which itself was particular. Grace, said Toplady, was always the unchangeable, irresistible power of God which He works by His sovereign Spirit to accomplish his good pleasure in those whom He wills to save.

When the Spirit begins, he carries on his work in the hearts of his people till they are made meet for the inheritance prepared for

²¹"Sermon on Isaiah 55:12," *Augustus Montague Toplady*, p. 397.

²²"Thoughts on Perseverance," *Works*, p. 770.

them above; for he has engaged in covenant to bow the wills, to regulate the powers, and sanctify the affections of all the elect; to lead, guide, strengthen, and direct them through this wilderness; and he never leaves the subjects of his grace till he puts them into the arms of the Redeemer in glory.²²

According to Toplady, one serious error of the well-meant offer was that it confused the external gospel of grace and the internal grace of the gospel.

The gospel of grace may be rejected; but the grace of the gospel cannot. God's written message in the Scriptures and his verbal message by his ministers may or may not be listened to ... But when God himself comes, and takes the heart into his own hand; when he speaks from heaven to the soul, and makes the gospel of grace a channel to convey the grace of the gospel; the business is effectually done.²³

In the call of the gospel, therefore, the grace of faith and repentance were neither conditions of salvation nor promised to everyone. According to Toplady, they were the very blessings that God promised to and powerfully works in his elect through the preaching of the gospel by the Spirit.

God's covenant love to us in Christ is another stream, flowing from the fountain of unmingled grace ... How is it possible that either God's purposes or that his covenant concerning us, can be in any respect whatsoever suspended on the will or the works of men; seeing both his purposes and his covenant were framed, and fixed, and agreed upon, by the persons in the Trinity, not only before men existed, but before angels themselves were created, or time itself was born? All was vast eternity, when grace was federally given us in Christ ere the world began ... Repentance and faith, new obedience and perseverance, are not conditions of interest in the covenant of grace (for then it would be a covenant of works); but consequences and tokens of covenant interest.²⁴

²³"A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrine," *Works*, p. 318.

²⁴"Free-will and Merit Fairly Examined," *Works*, p. 356.

In close connection, then, Toplady considered as utter nonsense Wesley's claim that if God distributed faith according to election, then human responsibility was negated and God became the author of sin. Humans, Toplady responded, were fully responsible for their own sin. Besides, due to his sovereignty, God was never obligated to bestow faith or any other grace upon any individual in the fallen human race—let alone all of them.

I am not afraid to answer with the word of God that repentance, faith, and sanctification, are God's own gifts, which he is not bound to bestow on any man and might have withheld from all men ... Given they are to some, or none would have them. Given they are not to all, else none would be without them. The regenerate work the works of God with consent, freedom, and desire, in consequence of grace bestowed; the unregenerate commit evil with no less desire, freedom, and consent, in consequence of that original depravation which God (for unfathomable reasons) was pleased to permit, and which nothing but his own grace can effectually supersede.²⁵

Even though he repudiated the notion of conditions, Toplady affirmed strongly that faith, repentance, and good works were absolutely necessary for salvation. If that was all someone meant by the word "condition," he would have had no serious disagreement, although like Luther with the phrase "free-will," he would rather the word "condition" was banned from the Reformed vocabulary due to the confusion it fostered. Faith, repentance, and good works were not conditions because God distributed them and made them effective according to his sovereign good pleasure. This, however, did not exclude them from being necessary for salvation. Faith was absolutely necessary due to the depravity of fallen mankind, which Toplady believed was total. An unregenerate man, he said, was absolutely dead in a spiritual sense.

He has no hearing of the promises; no sight of his own misery, of the holiness of God, of the purity of the law, nor of Christ as covenanting, obeying, dying, and interceding; no taste of God's

²⁵"More Work for Mr. John Wesley," *Works*, p. 755.

²⁶"Observations and Reflections," *Works*, p. 556.

love in Christ and the sweetness of communion with him by the Spirit; no feeling of conviction in a way of grace, humiliation, and self-renunciation; no scent after God and glory; no hungerings and thirstings after spiritual consolations and assurance; no motion toward divine enjoyments and evangelical holiness.²⁶

Good works and repentance were no less necessary than faith for salvation because they were “essential prerequisites to spiritual peace on earth and ... preparative for the eternal happiness of heaven.” They were all necessary precisely because God ordained them to be indispensable aspects and means of salvation itself. But, Toplady insisted:

Neither repentance, or faith, or any of their practical fruits, are in the least respect causal, or conditional, or meritorious of pardon, happiness, and eternal life. Every grace and every good work are the free gifts of God ... Therefore, when we say that no man can be ultimately saved without such and such qualifications; we do not mean that those qualifications have any influence in obtaining our salvation (for inherent grace and eternal glory are already obtained and infallibly secured to all God’s elect by the obedience and blood of Christ): but that those qualifications (as faith, repentance, and holiness of heart and life) are essential branches and indispensable evidences of this absolutely free salvation.²⁷

We conclude by noting that contrary to the opinion of many Reformed preachers today, Toplady also believed that predestination must be preached as an important aspect of the gospel. By this he meant it was necessary for the gospel minister to trace salvation and its necessary fruits to their decretal source. Today, many Reformed ministers, who share Wesley’s well-meant offer but are somewhat embarrassed by his stance on predestination, nevertheless have imbibed his opinion that predestination has no place in the gospel. Toplady disagreed.

He knew from first-hand experience the dreadful result of stripping predestination from the gospel message either explicitly or implicitly. He was also well aware of the fact that to preach election was intimidating because it was offensive to the natural pride of men. In fact, he admitted that for the first four years

²⁷“Joy in Heaven Over One Repenting Sinner,” *Works*, p. 375.

of his own ministry, he preached little else but what he called the “general outlines of the gospel.” His reasons were simple. He thought “these were sufficient” and he was “afraid to go any further.” But, he discovered such preaching was completely ineffective. “The generality of my hearers were pleased,” he confessed, “but very few were converted.” Then, as he put it, “God himself . . . gradually freed me from that fear . . . [so that I] opened my mouth and made known the entire mystery of his gospel.” The results astounded him. In his words,

multitudes were very angry, but the conversions which God gave me reason to hope He has wrought have been at least three for one before. Thus, I can testify as far as I have been concerned, the usefulness of preaching predestination.²⁸

Besides the fact that he thought it most effective, there were other reasons he believed preachers should preach predestination as a necessary part of the gospel. First, it comforted greatly the people of God in their battles against sin and doubt by bringing them to the very fountain head of the gospel. Preachers who did not take election into account, he said, “turned their back upon the tree of life, quenched one of the capital lights which they ought to elevate on a candlestick, and withheld from people the very root and essence of the joyful sound.”²⁹ Second, Toplady believed that there was good precedence. That precedence was Jesus Christ himself, that “great preacher of predestination.” Christ, Toplady claimed, “considered election as a heart-reviving doctrine or He never would have commanded his disciples to rejoice because their names were written in heaven.”³⁰ And finally, preaching predestination as a necessary aspect of the gospel demolished both Phariseism and Antinomianism. Toplady believed that these two errors were as old as Adam because they belonged to the depraved nature everyone inherited from this first father. And only when believers understood that good works—and faith—were the fruit of election and not a condition, would they both perform them and not rely upon them for righteousness. Toplady claimed,

²⁸“Letter to Countess Huntingdon,” *Works*, pp. 862-863.

²⁹“Sermon: Good News From Heaven,” *Works*, p. 368.

³⁰“Sermon: Good News From Heaven,” *Works*, p. 368.

Predestination destroy[s] the merit of works and obedience, but not the performance of them, since holiness is itself one end of election, and the elect are as much chosen to intermediate sanctification, on their way as they are to that ultimate glory which crowns their journey's end.³¹

We have now briefly presented the history and doctrinal issues involved in the eighteenth century battle between the old Arminian, Mr. John Wesley and the young Reformed pastor, Augustus M. Toplady. It has been our intent to demonstrate that with honesty to Scripture and the Reformed faith, this man defended honourably the true gospel of Jesus Christ against the onslaught of a devious and deceitful opponent who preached a false gospel that God wills all men to be saved, a gospel now known as the well-meant offer. There is a reason we have presented this material. In his day, Augustus M. Toplady was widely considered by the English-speaking, Reformed church-world to be one of the most articulate and faithful representatives of Calvinism. They snatched his pamphlets from the bookstores as fast as they were printed and thousands crowded into church when he preached. Now, this godly man is largely forgotten, which is shame enough. Much worse, he is now condemned by those (allegedly) from his own camp. In his lifetime, only John Wesley and his Arminian hoodlums were so bold as to sully the name of this good man. Now, John Wesley is praised to the high heavens while Augustus Toplady is openly castigated. This is really not all that surprising because this is done by a breed of theologians who shamelessly promote the well-meant offer while claiming to be fully Reformed. As Toplady would have said: The well-meant offer is nothing more than Arminianism in a mask. We agree. Remove it and behold ... John Wesley.

³¹"A Caveat Against Unsound Doctrine," *Works*, p. 314.