

Reformed Christian Theology ~ A layman's understanding of the will of God in the Christian life, from a reformed theological perspective.

Cliff Notes for Theophilus to Autolcus

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Theophilus was reportedly the Bishop of Antioch, though no trace of this is found in any of his extant writings. He wrote three books to a man Autolycus, mostly revolving around the idea that pagans believe in exceedingly immoral gods in contradistinction with the true God as revealed in the Christian Scriptures. He views the Christian religion as self-evidently true and in fact devotes a whole book (his third one) to proving how old the world is and how the Bible portrays accurate history. This book is not very accurate, but hey, he gave it a shot.

Of more interest to us here were Theophilus' doctrines. It appears that he retained the Biblical soteriology of writers such as Clement and like Justin Martyr and Origen speaks of baptismal regeneration, but does not make the argument that baptism has efficacy when administered to those who do not repent. Further, it is clear in his writings that his authority is the Scriptures and salvation is by faith alone, as there is no indication that a system of penances has been devised yet.



Theophilus' soteriology is thoroughly Reformed, as evidenced by the following:

For God is seen by those who are enabled to see Him when they have the eyes of their soul opened: for all have eyes; but in some they are overspread, and do not see the light of the sun. Yet it does not follow, because the blind do not see, that the light of the sun does not shine; but let the blind blame themselves and their own eyes. So also you, O man, have the eyes of your soul overspread by your sins and evil deeds (Theophilus, To Autolycus, Book 1, Chapter 2).

The below passages suggest that faith alone, and not membership in a church, saves a man. The Scriptures are seen as the sole authority in which a man gets this saving knowledge:

But, if you will, you may be healed. Entrust yourself to the Physician, and He will couch the eyes of your soul and of your heart (Theophilus, To Autolycus, Book 1, Chapter 7).

At the same time, I met with the sacred Scriptures of the holy prophets, who also by the Spirit of God foretold the things that have already happened, just as they came to pass, and the things now occurring as they are now happening, and things future in the order in which they shall be accomplished. Admitting, therefore, the proof which events happening as predicted afford, I do not disbelieve, but I believe, obedient to God (Theophilus, To Autolycus, Book 1, Chapter 14).

[I]f you please, give reverential attention to the prophetic Scriptures, and they will make your way plainer for escaping the eternal punishments, and obtaining the eternal prizes of God (Ibid).

For as man, disobeying, drew death upon himself; so, obeying the will of God, he who desires is able to procure for himself life everlasting. For God has given us a law and holy commandments; and every one who keeps these can be saved, and, obtaining the resurrection, can inherit incorruption (Theophilus, To Autolycus, Book 2, Chapter 27).

Regeneration via repentance and baptism:

Moreover, the things proceeding from the waters were blessed by God, that this also might be a sign of men's being destined to receive repentance and remission of sins, through the water and laver of regeneration — as many as come to the truth, and are born again, and receive blessing from God (Theophilus, To Autolycus, Book 2, Chapter 16).

Christophanies:

His Word, through whom He made all things, being His power and His wisdom, assuming the person of the Father and Lord of all, went to the garden in the person of God, and conversed with Adam. For the divine writing itself teaches us that Adam said that he had heard the voice. But what else is this voice but the Word of God, who is also His Son (Theophilus, To Autolycus, Book 2, Chapter 22)?

Unorthodox view of Christ's eternity?

For before anything came into being He had Him as a counsellor, being His own mind and thought. But when God wished to make all that He determined on, He begot this Word, uttered, the first-born of all creation, not Himself being emptied of the Word [Reason], but having begotten Reason, and always conversing with His Reason...In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, John 1:1 showing that at first God was alone, and the Word in Him. Then he says, The Word was God; all things came into existence through Him; and apart from Him not one thing came into existence. The Word, then, being God, and being naturally produced from God, whenever the Father of the universe wills, He sends Him to any place; and He, coming, is both heard and seen, being sent by Him, and is found in a place (Ibid).

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