

# The Foundation of Augustinian-Calvinism

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*The Foundation of Augustinian-Calvinism*. By Ken Wilson. NP: Regula Fidei Press, 2019. 121 pp. Paper, \$14.99.

I have known Ken Wilson for many years, having been his professor for five or six online classes, including four semesters of Greek (second- and third-year master's level). He showed himself to be an outstanding student and researcher. He later went on to get M.Div. and Th.M. degrees. With those in hand, he then worked for and received a D.Phil. degree from Oxford University. This book is a very abbreviated and simplified version of his doctoral dissertation.

Wilson's basic point is found in the title and the cover of the book. The cover has a picture of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. His point is that modern Calvinism, which he prefers to call Augustinian-Calvinism (cf. p. 110), is built on the foundation of the views of Augustine, particularly his deterministic and non-free-will views, and that the result is that Calvinism is a tottering system of theology.

His major point is the conclusion he draws from his studies on the influence of Augustine on Calvinist thought. He is suggesting that Calvinism is almost certainly wrong since it is based on the theology of Stoics and Manicheans who led Augustine to adopt determinism and non-free will. **Straw Man Argument** of Wilkin misrepresenting my book as a Genetic Fallacy

Wilson points out that Augustine's theology changed three times: "Stage 1.) the foreseen merit of works (386-394 CE), Stage 2.) no foreseen merit of works but only God's foreknowledge of faith alone, per **Tichonius [sic] No, Tyconius, Tychonius, and Ticonius are also alternate spellings** (395-411 CE), then finally, Stage 3.) Divine Unilateral Predetermination of Individual Eternal Destinies [DUPIED]—unilateral election devoid of foreknowledge or even faith (412-430 CE)" (p. 91). As can be seen here, Wilson prefers CE, Common Era, over AD, in the year of the Lord. He also prefers BCE, Before the Common Era, over BC, Before Christ. I assume he used those designations because leading theological scholarship today prefers CE and BCE.

A truly surprising suggestion by Wilson is that the doctrine of justification by faith alone was widely held **(I only cited four authors)** and taught in the Church up until the time of Augustine. **As proof**, he cites a journal article by Daniel Williams entitled "Justification by Faith: a Patristic Doctrine" (p. 94, note 5). **Wilson argues that justification by faith was widely taught in the early Church from the second through the fourth centuries. Misrepresents me.**

I have often argued that justification by faith alone, while not found in the surviving writings of the Church fathers, was surely believed and taught by many in every generation from the time of the Apostles until the Reformation. God always has a remnant. **Wilkin's IPSE DIXIT FALLACY** However, while it would be great if there were some proof of that in Patristic writings, I did not find that in Wilson's book. **Wilson does not give a single quote from any Patristic writer to prove his point. Possibly** such quotes are found in his larger dissertation.

The article by Williams is freely available online. I found the article. It does not prove what Wilson suggests. It proves my point against Augustine. It does not prove what Wilkin wants to prove. Instead, it proves the opposite. Williams showed that the Church fathers before Augustine taught Arminian Lordship Salvation (though Williams does not use that expression WILKIN VIEWS ARMINIANS AND CALVINISTS AS NOT BEING CHRISTIANS). They believed that one was *initially* justified by faith, not by works of the OT Law, but that in order to obtain final justification and in order to retain one's salvation, one had to persevere in a life of good works.

Wilson often calls both the Church fathers and the Church people before Augustine "early Christians." He does not simply mean people who called themselves Christians. He indicated that these were people who believed in justification by faith alone, apart from works. Straw Man Argument – I never used 'justification.' He cites four Patristic writers whom he says taught "unmerited grace without works" (p. 94). He was referring to "Hilary of Poitiers, Tichonius [sic], Victorinus, and Jerome" in their works "on Romans and Galatians" (p. 94). This seems to be taken primarily from the article by Williams. However, Wilson gives no quotations to back up this claim. Instead, there is a footnote that refers to the article by Daniel Williams. While it is nice to have a reference to that article, it is frustrating that we are not given any quotes.

Of course, Roman Catholics have always taught justification by faith. What they never taught, and do not teach today, is justification by faith *alone, apart from works*. Nor did they or do they teach eternal security. A WILKIN HERESY REQUIREMENT; see my book *Heresy of the Grace Evangelical Society*

What is it that a person must do to have everlasting life? Wilson does not answer that question directly. NOT MY PURPOSE OR INTENT But twice in the book he gives a hint of what his answer would be. In the conclusion to the last chapter before the overall conclusion, he writes, "Humans only needed to accept God's gift of salvation in Christ through their own residual God-given divine image (i.e., free choice)" (p. 106). That is quite vague. Then in the final chapter, the conclusion, he says, "Early Christians taught GRACE: God offers salvation equally, Residual free choice response, Atonement universally, Conditional election based on foreknowledge, and Eternal life for those who respond in faith" (p. 116). There Wilson mentions the need to "respond in faith." But he fails to say precisely what one must believe to have everlasting life. He then adds, "These concepts comprise the solid GRACE foundation championed by earliest Christians over against heretical and pagan deterministic DUPIED and the later Augustine's TULIP. The Christian God of love sacrificially invited all humans to join him in eternal life" (p. 116).

Wilson believes in election to everlasting life, but he sees election as conditioned upon something God foresees in a person. MISLEADING – 'something' is FAITH per all ECFs even including the early Augustine

I appreciate the work that Wilson has done in pointing out the non-Christian roots of Augustine's later theology. Non-Calvinists will likely much appreciate his work. However, I do not believe that this book provides much help in discussing these issues with Calvinists. Modern Calvinists cite Scripture to support their views. They do not cite Augustine. I recall Norm Geisler pointing

out that you cannot reject a view because of its origins. Wrongly thinks there is a genetic fallacy error. He said that it does not matter that creation is found in the Bible. What mattered, he said, was whether the evidence supported creationism or not. The same is true with modern Calvinism. When I discuss these issues with Calvinists, I discuss Scripture. I see no value in pointing out the Stoic and Manichean underpinnings. But Manichaeans, never Christians, interpreted Scripture deterministically. NO EARLY CHRISTIAN DID. This is an argument from 100% agreement among early Christians against these pagan deterministic views. Augustine dragged Manichaean determinism into Christianity using their deterministic interpretations of Scripture. You cannot use Scripture to argue with Calvinists over their verses because they have been predetermined to be about determinism. You must show them the pagan roots of their pagan interpretation which no prior Christian used for 400 years. Wilkin has missed the entire point of the book.

I recommend *The Foundation of Augustinian-Calvinism* for pastors and theologians. Even lay teachers who are comfortable reading scholarly literature (This little book is not scholarly literature, see page iv in Preface) might find it profitable to read. It would probably not be of interest for most laypeople.

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